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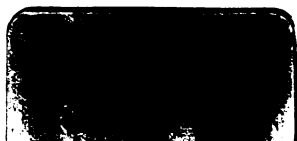
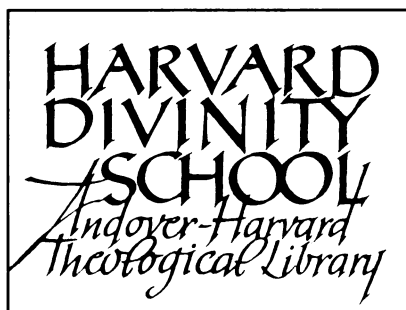
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51.9

INGERSOLL



Is Suicide a Sin?

^{Green}
ROBERT G. INGERSOLL'S FAMOUS LETTER.

Replies by

MGR. THOS. DUCEY, *Roman Catholic.*

NYM ORINKLE, *Feuilletonist.*

MADISON C. PETERS, *Protestant.*

WM. Q. JUDGE, *Theosophist.*

C. WILFRED MOWBRAY, *Anarchist.*

JOHN T. NAGLE, *Statistician.*

AND

Col. Ingersoll's Brilliant Rejoinder.

A Verdict of a Jury of Twelve Eminent Men of
New York.

Prefaced by a Startling Chapter,

Great Suicides of History!

SCHOPENHAUER'S CELEBRATED ESSAY
"ON SUICIDE."

Extracts from OMAR KHAYYAM, the Poet
Philosopher of Persia.



NEW YORK.
STANDARD PUBLISHING COMPANY,
1285 BROADWAY.
1894.

P-E 6494.4

1895, March 25.

Divinity School.

51.9

INGERSOLL

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,

Wer't not a Shame—wer't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultan to the realm of Death addrest;

The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

GREAT SUICIDES OF HISTORY.

FAMOUS MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE SOUGHT THE BARE BODKIN.

The other day there died in Vienna one of the greatest philanthropists of Europe, Baron Jaromir Mundy. He was rich, titled, born to the highest station. Yet he gave not only his fortune and his position, but his life as well, to the service of the poor and the suffering. He founded the great Samaritan, or Ready Aid, Society of Vienna, which has now been imitated all over the continent. He became a physician, and yet throughout his long life he never accepted a penny for all his services to the State or the people. He faced the cholera in Russia and the plague in Constantinople. His charity was cosmopolitan; it knew no bounds. When he died, he had left only the little income he had reserved for his daily needs. He was given an official burial. That is to say, he was buried in disgrace. None of the great societies of which he was a member nor the charities he had founded were represented at his fu-

neral. Nevertheless there was an immense concourse of the Viennese poor, who had learned to bless and reverence his name.

This good, this great, this Christ-like man was a suicide. He drowned himself in the Prater. He was seventy-four years old, honored and loved throughout the empire. There seemed no possible motive for his act. Yet he was perfectly sane. He had simply wearied of life.

Apparently our modern world has not yet outgrown its curious mediaeval prejudice against a man who takes his own life.

Yet a complete list of the great suicides of history would include half the celebrated names of antiquity and many of the most famed of modern times. The greatest poet, the greatest orator, the greatest philosopher, the greatest general and the two most famous women of ancient times—Homer, Demosthenes, Aristotle, Hannibal, Sappho and Cleopatra, were all suicides. In this same list would be found some of the wisest, the most humane, the most heroic, the most talented, the bravest, the kindest, and the most agreeable men and women who ever lived.

Let us run down the roll.

It is recorded that Homer wandering blind through Greece and spurned by seven cities, ended his life because he could not solve the famous "fisherman's puzzle," which in the time of the Greeks answered very much to the 15-14-16 puzzle of our own day. He wrote a poem which has been translated into almost every known tongue upon earth.

In this same far-gone day on the island of Mitylene lived a woman, whose songs, after a lapse of twenty-five centuries, are still the most perfect ever written by a woman. This was Sappho. She was honored in her own day and great philosophers and celebrities came to pay her homage. But her lover proved unkind and in despair she threw herself from the Lesbian Rock. The spot is pointed out to modern travelers in the Grecian Archipelego.

For that matter, the greatest of the Greeks for five centuries were suicides. Demosthenes, whose eloquence has survived the corroding touch and gnawing tooth of time, poisoned himself with a virus which he carried in the point of a pen. Empedocles, the philosopher; grew weary of life and threw himself into the crater of Vesuvius.

Cleanthes another philosopher, was afflicted with disease. His physician prescribed severe dieting and so great was his pleasure at the surcease of pain, that he refused to eat anything whatever, and the wise man starved himself to death.

Aristarchus did likewise.

Aristotle, at whose feet the students of philosophy have sat for twenty centuries and who looked so wisely into life that his philosophy is still practically supreme, found life a burden and laid it down with his own hand.

Isocrates, who added to the lustre of Attic eloquence, facing Phillip of Macedon, chose death before surrender.

Aristides, known to history as "the Just," was

a Grecian statesman and general. His people became corrupt and could not tolerate so perfect a man. He was banished and in his lonely exile, he sought death as an end of his disappointment.

Themistocles, a brave Greek was ordered to lead Persians against his own countrymen. Rather than do it, he killed himself.

At the age of 89, the philosopher Zeno fell and broke his thumb. He construed it as an evil omen and betook himself from earth.

Mithridates, surnamed the Great, was king of Pontus. He lived to an advanced age and growing weary of life, put it aside.

Lycurgus, whose genius for government made the Sparta of history, did likewise.

In Biblical history there are many suicides.

Sampson, to revenge himself upon his enemies, pulled down the pillars of the Temple.

Saul, rather than fall into the hands of the Philistines, took his own life.

Eleazar, Ahithophel, and Judas Iscariot were all self-murderers. There were others.

Among the Romans, there was a time when suicide was almost a mania. It was a time when the republic had reached its highest stage of civilization, when poetry and art and eloquence flourished and made the name of Rome immortal. It is a remarkable fact that in the savage age of Rome there were no suicides. The latter came with civilization and culture.

Shakspeare has pictured the deaths of four of the greatest names of that day. Brutus and Cassius committed suicide when they were defeated

by Octavius Caesar. At that time the name of Brutus stood for integrity and honor and high purpose throughout the Roman world.

Marc Antony thought his mistress was unfaithful and ran himself upon his sword.

When Cleopatra heard the news, she took the asp into her bosom. It might be said in passing that Cleopatra was not an Egyptian, but a Greek. This accounts for her charm.

Cato, the Younger, was reputed a just and wise man. He was an enemy of tyrants. He fought Caesar with all his strength, fought to save the Republic from a dictatorship. When Caesar triumphed, he fell upon his sword.

Terrence was among the most famous of Roman poets. He lost his collection and in despair drowned himself.

Labienus had his works condemned to be burned. He preferred death to such a humiliation.

Portia, who was the daughter of Cato, and the wife of Brutus, committed suicide by eating burning coals.

One of the greatest philosophers of that or any other time, was Seneca. His "Morals" are still read by all who admire a noble life and high, unselfish thought. He wrote much on suicide—said it was the privilege of all and the refuge of the oppressed, and when life hung heavily upon him, he chose that method of release.

Lucretius was probably the deepest thinker as well as one of the greatest poets of the Augustan age. He anticipated by eighteen centuries the theories which the discoveries of Darwin intro-

duced to our time. He lived near to the age of forty-three, when his wife deserted him. Philosopher as he was, he could not survive the pain which her act caused. He killed himself.

Democles scalded himself to death.

Nero, after such a reign as history never knew before or since, cut his own throat rather than be given up to his enemies.

In the following year the emperor Otho, who had succeeded him, gathered a brilliant party of friends at his dinner table. He dismissed them with a graciousness that is still a part of his fame, and then calmly took his own life.

Hannibal thought to put the Roman empire under his feet. He failed and in his disappointment he committed suicide.

All these men lived in days of enlightenment. After them came the Dark Ages. Civilization slumbered. Superstition reigned. There was no learning, no culture. The people were savage and barbaric. There were few suicides. When the world emerged again from darkness, when the Renaissance came, genius and suicide again took their abode among men.

Robert Burton wrote the "Anatomy of Melancholy." It was a treasury of apt quotation and brilliant wit. He revised it again and again, and, when he had brought it to suit his taste, he committed suicide.

Sir John Suckling was a poet. You will find his verses in any volume of *lyra elegantiarum*. He also was a suicide.

So was Maitland of Lethington, who died in

1573 and so was the Earl of Essex, who died just a century later.

It is recorded that Vatel, the famous chef of Louis XIV, took his life in despair because the fish did not arrive in time for dinner.

Blount, the deist, who took his life near the close of the seventeenth century, was pointed out by pious people of that day as an example of the awful fate which would overtake an unbeliever, a "miscreant" as they called them then. This odious word still survives.

Although Eustace Budgell lived half a century later, when men had grown quite intelligent again, the fact that he should defend suicide and then kill himself was likewise pointed out as the natural result of holding impious views.

In the time of Doctor Johnson, a young man came up to London and because he had no friends and nothing to eat and nowhere to sleep, in despair he took poison. He was nineteen when he died. He was the son of a peasant and had little education. Yet such were his marvelous talents that he is still pointed out as the most remarkable example of precocious genius which history affords. The biography of this boy of nineteen has been written many times, and men of learning have given their time to editing and annotating his works. This was Thomas Chatterton, whose life Alfred de Vigny has put into one of the most pathetic tragedies in French literature.

England owes her greatest empire to Robert Clive. He conquered a land wider in extent, with a larger population and a more ancient history.

than did Alexander, Caesar or Napoleon. When he went out to India it was as a shipping clerk. Fear of a massacre made him a general. He displayed a genius for war that has ranked him with the great soldiers of all time. He returned to England rich, famous, to lay the empire he had conquered at the feet of the English crown. He was persecuted, maligned and in his rage and resentment, he sought the great quietus. Had he been a poor man his body would have been buried at a cross-roads and a stake driven through his heart, for England's infamous and barbaric law which added this ignominy to a suicide's death was not repealed for half a century afterward.

The sensational deaths of Kleist, the German poet, and Frau Vogel, a woman of note, who killed themselves together at Potsdam, profoundly affected the youth of Goethe's day.

The name of Roland is among the highest of those who fought to keep the French Revolution from developing into the Reign of Terror. Imprisoned for his patriotism, he killed himself.

It was from Rousseau that Thomas Jefferson obtained the ideas which prompted the Declaration of Independence. Although the manner of Rousseau's death is shrouded in mystery, it is believed that he committed suicide.

Pichegru, a brave soldier of the Revolution, killed himself.

Robert Tannahill was, like Chatterton, a boy of genius. He was a weaver and a poet. One day the Ettrick Shepherd came to pay him a visit and to praise his poetry. This was the boy's first taste

of fame. The next day he had thrown himself into a millpond. He was very poor.

One of England's greatest jurists, a man who spent his life, as Wendell Phillips said, trying to make law synonymous with justice, and who was worthy of rank with Papinian and D'Agessseau, was Romilly. When he began his reform, two hundred and twenty-two crimes in England were punishable with hanging. There are not a dozen now. This was largely Romilly's work. He was a suicide.

Doctor Bull wrote England's national anthem. He killed himself.

Castlereagh cut his own throat. But he does not belong in this list.

Robert Haydon was a painter of genius. Naturally he lived in poverty, persecuted with debts. He had just completed a magnificent picture when he put a bullet through his brain.

Hugh Miller was a Scotch geologist who proved that the Mosaic account of creation was a fantastic tissue of fiction. He was poor, and he had to work very hard. His health gave away, and he took his own life. Good people, many of them, still think that this was a judgement upon him for the impious discovery which he made.

Richard Realf was born to genius and poverty. Lady Byron praised his poetry. He came to America because it was a free land. He fought under John Brown. His verses inspired many a soldier's heart. Reverses, disappointment and life-long poverty drove him to the use of the bare bodkin.

Merely to recall cases which are still within the memory of men living, Admiral Fitzroy, Prévost-Paradol, the brilliant Frenchman, E. M. Ward the painter, Frederick Archer, ^{the} Louis II, king of Bavaria, Rudolph, crown prince of Austria, Pigott, the spy, Balma^{ce}ceda, the deposed president of Chili, Ralston, the California millionaire, Franklin B. Gowen, the Philadelphia railroad president and Boulanger, the French general—all made their own quietus.

Besides all these, there are many other great names in history of men who at one time or another of their lives attempted to commit suicide. Among these are Vittoria Alfieri, the poet, Michael Angelo, Kotzebue, the German dramatist, Cowper, who ^{once} tried to kill himself, ^{twice}, Chateaubriand, the French poet, Lamartine, George Sand, and the philosopher Comte. Byron declared that while writing "Childe Harold," he would often have committed suicide had it not been for the fact that it would have given so much pleasure to his mother-in-law. Shelley thought many times to resort to poison as "the key to the golden chamber of rest." Bismarck declared after the battle of Sadowa that if the Prussians had been defeated he would have killed himself.

Even the great Napoleon in the year 1794 attempted suicide owing to his extreme poverty and his dark prospects. This was three years before he was master of France. The great Goethe records that at one time he went to bed night after night with a dagger on his pillow hoping for the time when he would have courage enough to plunge

it into his heart. And anyone who reads the sonnets of Shakspeare carefully will see that our greatest poet often contemplated self-destruction.

Many of the greatest writers of antiquity, defended and even applauded suicide—Epictetus, Pliny, Zeno, Seneca, and our popular Plutarch. Both Hume and Rousseau defended the right of any man to take his own life as absolute and indefensible. Montesquieu and Montaigne held similar opinions.

Schopenhauer, who has influenced German thought more than any ^{other} philosopher since Kant, and his brilliant disciple, Hartmann, both believe that civilization and suicide are allied, that the increase of human knowledge only increases the terrors of life, and that the time will come when all mankind, having reached the highest attainable goal of intelligence and culture, will simultaneously destroy themselves.

And who shall gainsay? Far back, beyond history, there lived a fabled people, the Hyperboreans, in a land so favored, under such a gracious sky, that to them life was such an unalloyed delight they sought death as a sheer release from ennui.

The stage and literature are full of heroic suicides—Ajax, Brutus and Cassius, Antony, Werter, Chatterton, Hamlet, Javert—not to mention a host of others.

Probably the greatest description of a suicide in the English language is that to be found in Edgar Saltus' story, "Mr. Incoul's Misadventure."

CARL SNYDER.

IS SUICIDE A SIN ?

COL. INGERSOLL'S FIRST LETTER.

I do not know whether self-killing is on the increase or not. If it is, then there must be, on the average, more trouble, more sorrow, more failure, and, consequently, more people are driven to despair. In civilized life there is a great struggle, great competition, and many fall. To fail in a great city is like being wrecked at sea. In the country a man has friends. He can get a little credit, a little help, but in the city it is different. The man is lost in the multitude. In the roar of the streets his cry is not heard. Death becomes his only friend. Death promises release from want, from hunger and pain, and so the poor wretch lays down his burden, dashes it from his shoulders and falls asleep.

To me all this seems very natural. The wonder is that so many endure and suffer to the natural end, that so many nurse the spark of life in huts and prisons, keep it and guard it through years of misery and want ; support it by beggary, by eating the crust found in the gutter, and to whom it only gives days of weariness and nights of fear and dread. Why should the man, sitting amid the wreck of all he had, the loved ones dead, friends lost, seek to lengthen, to preserve his life? What can the future have for him ?

Under many circumstances a man has the right to kill himself. When life is of no value to him.

when he can be of no real assistance to others, why should a man continue? When he is of no benefit, when he is a burden to those he loves, why should he remain? The old idea was that "God" made us and placed us here for a purpose and that it was our duty to remain until He called us. The world is outgrowing this absurdity. What pleasure can it give "God" to see a man devoured by a cancer? To see the quivering flesh slowly eaten? To see the nerves throbbing with pain? Is this a festival for "God?" Why should the poor wretch stay and suffer? A little morphine would give him sleep—the agony would be forgotten and he would pass unconsciously from happy dreams to painless death.

If "God" determines all births and deaths, of what use is medicine and why should doctors defy with pills and powders, the decrees of "God?" No one, except a few insane, act now according to this childish superstition. Why should a man, surrounded by flames, in the midst of a burning building, from which there is no escape, hesitate to put a bullet through his brain or a dagger in his heart? Would it give "God" pleasure to see him burn? When did the man lose the right of self-defense?

So, when a man has committed some awful crime, why should he stay and ruin his family and friends? Why should he add to the injury? Why should he live, filling his days and nights, and the days and nights of others, with grief and pain, with agony and tears?

Why should a man sentenced to imprisonment

for life hesitate to still his heart? The grave is better than the cell. Sleep is sweeter than the ache of toil. The dead have no masters.

So the poor girl, betrayed and deserted, the door of home closed against her, the faces of friends averted, no hand that will help, no eye that will soften with pity, the future an abyss filled with monstrous shapes of dread and fear, her mind racked by fragments of thoughts like clouds broken by storm, pursued, surrounded by the serpents of remorse, flying from horrors too great to bear, rushes with joy through the welcome door of death.

Undoubtedly there are many cases of perfectly justifiable suicide—cases in which not to end life would be a mistake, sometimes almost a crime.

As to the necessity of death, each must decide for himself. And if a man honestly decides that death is best—best for him and others—and acts upon the decision, why should he be blamed?

Certainly the man who kills himself is not a physical coward. He may have lacked moral courage, but not physical. It may be said that some men fight duels because they are afraid to decline. They are between two fires—the chance of death and the certainty of dishonor, and they take the chance of death. So the Christian martyrs were, according to their belief, between two fires—the flames of the fagot that could burn but for a few moments and the fires of God, that were eternal. And they choose the flames of the fagot.

Men who fear death to that degree that they will bear all the pains and pangs that nerves can

feel rather than die, cannot afford to call the suicide a coward. It does not seem to me that Brutus was a coward or that Seneca was. Surely Antony had nothing left to live for. Cato was not a craven. He acted on his judgment. So with hundreds of others who felt that they had reached the end—that the journey was done, the voyage was over, and, so feeling, stopped. It seems certain that the man who commits suicide, who “does the thing that stops all other deeds, that shackles accident and bolts up change” is not lacking in physical courage.

If men had the courage they would not linger in prisons, in alms-houses, in hospitals, they would not bear the pangs of incurable disease, the stains of disdonor, they would not live in filth and want, in poverty and hunger, neither would they wear the chain of slavery. All this can be accounted for only by the fear of death or “of something after.”

Seneca, knowing that Nero intended to take his life, had no fear. He knew that he could defeat the Emperor. He knew that “at the bottom of every river, in the coil of every rope, on the point of every dagger, Liberty sat and smiled.” He knew that it was his own fault if he allowed himself to be tortured to death by his enemy. He said: “There is this blessing, that while life has but one entrance, it has exits innumerable, and as I choose the house in which I live, the ship in which I will sail, so will I choose the time and manner of my death.”

To me this is not cowardly, but manly and noble.

Under the Roman law persons found guilty of certain offences were not only destroyed but their blood was polluted and their children became outcasts. If, however they died before conviction their children were saved. Many committed suicide to save their babes. Certainly they were not cowards. Although guilty of great crimes they had enough of honor, of manhood, left to save their innocent children. This was not cowardice.

Without doubt many suicides are caused by insanity. Men lose their property. The fear of the future over powers them. Things lose proportion, they lose poise and balance, and in a flash, a gleam of frenzy, kill themselves. The disappointed in love, broken in heart—the light fading from their lives—seek the refuge of death.

Those who take their lives in painful, barbarous ways—who mangle their throats with broken glass, dash themselves from towers and roofs, take poisons that torture like the rack—such persons must be insane. But those who take the facts into account, who weigh the arguments for and against, and who decide that death is best—the only good—and then resort to reasonable means, may be, so far as I can see, in full possession of their minds.

Life is not the same to all—to some a blessing, to some a curse, to some not much in any way. Some leave it with unspeakable regret, some with the keenest joy and some with indifference.

Religion, or the decadence of religion, has a

bearing upon the number of suicides. The fear of "God," of judgment, of eternal pain will stay the hand, and people so believing will suffer here until relieved by natural death. A belief in the eternal agony beyond the grave will cause such believers to suffer the pangs of this life. When there is no fear of the future, when death is believed to be a dreamless sleep, men have less hesitation about ending their lives. On the other hand, orthodox religion has driven millions to insanity. It has caused parents to murder their children and many thousands to destroy themselves and others.

It seems probable that all real, genuine orthodox believers who kill themselves must be insane, and to such a degree that their belief is forgotten. "God" and hell are out of their minds.

I am satisfied that many who commit suicide are insane, many are in the twilight or dusk of insanity, and many are perfectly sane.

The law we have in this State making it a crime to attempt suicide is cruel and absurd and calculated to increase the number of successful suicides. When a man has suffered so much, when he has been so persecuted and pursued by disaster that he seeks the rest and sleep of death, why should the State add to the sufferings of that man? A man seeking death, knowing that he will be punished if he fails, will take extra pains and precautions to make death certain.

This law was born of superstition, passed by thoughtlessness and enforced by ignorance and cruelty.

When the house of life becomes a prison, when the horizon has shrunk and narrowed to a cell, and when the convict longs for the liberty of death, why should the effort to escape be regarded as a crime?

Of course, I regard life from a natural point of view. I do not take gods, heavens or hells into account. My horizon is the known, and my estimate of life is based upon what I know of life here in this world. People should not suffer for the sake of supernatural beings or for other worlds or the hopes and fears of some future state. Our joys, our sufferings and our duties are here.

The law of New York about the attempt to commit suicide and the law as to divorce are about equal. Both are idiotic. Law cannot prevent suicide. Those who have lost all fear of death, care nothing for law and its penalties. Death is liberty, absolute and eternal.

We should remember that nothing happens out the natural. Back of every suicide and every attempt to commit suicide is the natural and efficient cause. Nothing happens by chance. In this world the facts touch each other. There is no space between—no room for chance. Given a certain heart and brain, certain conditions, and suicide is the necessary result. If we wish to prevent suicide we must change conditions. We must by education, by invention, by art, by civilization, add to the value of the average life. We must cultivate the brain and heart—do away with false pride and false modesty. We must become

generous enough to help our fellows without degrading them. We must make industry—useful work of all kinds—honorable. We must mingle a little affection with our charity—a little fellowship. We should allow those who have sinned to really reform. We should not think only of what the wicked have done, but we should think of what we have wanted to do. People do not hate the sick. Why should they despise the mentally weak—the diseased in brain?

Our actions are the fruit, the result, of circumstances—of conditions—and we do as we must. This great truth should fill the heart with pity for the failures of our race.

Sometimes I have wondered that Christians denounce the suicide; that in old times they buried him where the roads crossed, and drove a stake through his body. They took his property from his children and gave it to the State.

If Christians would only think, they would see that orthodox religion rests upon suicide—that man was redeemed by suicide, and that without suicide the whole world would have been lost.

If Christ were God, then he had the power to protect himself from the Jews without hurting them. But instead of using his power he allowed them to take his life.

If a strong man should allow a few little children to hack him to death with knives when he could easily have brushed them aside, would we not say that he committed suicide?

There is no escape. If Christ were, in fact, God and allowed the Jews to kill Him, then He consen-

ted to His own death—refused, though perfectly able, to defend and protect Himself, and was, in fact, a suicide.

We cannot reform the world by law or by superstition. As long as there shall be pain and failure, want and sorrow, agony and crime, men and women will untie life's knot and seeks the peace of death.

To the hopelessly imprisoned—to the dishonored and despised—to those who have failed, who have no future, no hope—to the abandoned, the broken-hearted, to those who are only remnants and fragments of men and women—how consoling, how enchanting is the thought of death!

And even to the most fortunate death at last is a welcome deliverer. Death is as natural and as merciful as life. When we have journeyed long—when we are weary—when we wish for the twilight, for the dusk, for the cool kisses of the night—when the senses are dull—when the pulse is faint and low—when the mists gather on the mirror of memory—when the past is almost forgotten, the present hardly perceived—when the future has but empty hands—death is as welcome as a strain of music.

After all, death is not so terrible as joyless life. Next to eternal happiness is to sleep in the soft clasp of the cool earth, disturbed by no dream, by no thought, by no pain, by no fear, unconscious of all and forever.

The wonder is that so many live, that in spite of rags and want, in spite of tenement and gutter, of filth and pain, they limp and stagger and crawl

beneath their burdens to the natural end. The wonder is that so few of the miserable are brave enough to die—that so many are terrified by the “something after death”—by the spectres and phantoms of superstition.

Most people are in love with life. How they cling to it in the arctic snows—how they struggle in the waves and currents of the sea—how they linger in famine—how they fight disaster and despair! On the crumbling edge of death they keep the flag flying and go down at last full of hope and courage.

But many have not such natures. They cannot bear defeat. They are dishartened by disaster. They lie down on the field of conflict and give the earth their blood.

They are our unfortunate brothers and sisters. We should not curse or blame—we should pity. On their pallid faces our tears should fall.

One of the best men I ever knew, with an affectionate wife, a charming and loving daughter, committed suicide. He was a man of generous impulses. His heart was loving and tender. He was conscientious, and so sensitive that he blamed himself for having done what at the time he thought was wise and best. He was the victim of his virtues. Let us be merciful in our judgments.

All we can say is that the good and the bad, the loving and the malignant, the conscientious and the vicious, the educated and the ignorant, actuated by many motives, urged and pushed by circumstances and conditions—sometimes in the

calm of judgment, sometimes in passion's storm and stress, sometimes in whirl and tempest of insanity—raise their hands against themselves and desperately put out the light of life.

Those who attempt suicide should not be punished. If they are insane they should, if possible be restored to reason; if sane, they should be reasoned with, calmed and assisted.

R. G. INGERSOLL.

INJUSTICE MAKES SUICIDES.

FATHER DUCEY'S VIEW OF THE QUESTION.

Col. Robert G. Ingersoll has asked. "Is suicide a sin?"

I do not know how Col. Ingersoll can put such a question. He does not believe in sin, for he ignores and denies the existence of the supernatural; and sin is defined as a crime against the law of God.

Many people are very severe against Col. Ingersoll. They seem to be unwilling to recognize that he has any good qualities for the reason that he is a professed agnostic and atheist. I am willing to admit that Col. Ingersoll is a first-class know-nothing when he deals with anything supernatural but I am unwilling to recognize Col. Ingersoll as a know-nothing when his sympathies are called upon in the interest of suffering humanity. I know that Col. Ingersoll is a man of large sym-

thies and that he is most kindly disposed to relieve generously the afflicted, whose suffering is brought to his notice. I know this, not from hearsay, but from numerous cases where I have been called, and to the relief of which cases Col. Ingersoll had contributed with his mind, his heart, and most generously from his pocket.

The knowledge of his conduct broke down my prejudice against the man. When I reflected on the goodness of his conduct I could not help giving to him my recognition and sympathy, but I give to him my unqualified condemnation when he attempts the part of the destroying angel against the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.

I was once present at a public dinner where Col. Ingersoll was to be the speaker of the evening. The presiding officer and toastmaster came to me and asked: "Will you say a few words before Col. Ingersoll? He has requested me to ask you to give him some inspiration." I smilingly answered: "Col. Ingersoll does not believe in inspiration, and I absolutely refuse to give him intellectual direction." When the Colonel delivered his address he had the good sense and the good taste not to offend the clergy. There were two Presbyterian ministers at the principal table, and we were fearing that the Colonel might give us a little of the hell in which he did not believe and force us to make a scene for self-protection and retire from the Colonel's flames. We saved ourselves, and were saved by the Colonel. But I had great fun with him, and so did the audience, when I was asked to speak. The Colonel did not have the

chance to review my language. Now I shall imperfectly review his characteristic letter on suicide.

Col. Ingersoll regards life from a natural point of view. He says he does not take God's heavens and hells into account. His horizon is the known and his estimate of life is based upon what he knows of the life here—in this world. He says that people should not suffer for the sake of the supernatural beings or for other worlds or the hopes and fears of some future state, and that our joys and sufferings and our duties are here. It seems to me that Col. Ingersoll's great fault is that he is a destroyer and not a constructor. He robs poor humanity of the only hope that gives it comfort and makes its afflicted existence endurable, and having robbed it of the bread of hope he reaches out to it the stone of despair.

Another bad point about the Colonel's propaganda of destruction is that he always gives his interesting lectures for a large financial retainer. Perhaps the good Colonel spends this one or two or three thousand dollars a night that he is said to receive for the benefit of the poor and despairing, and not for the comfort and luxury of those who are near and dear to him. The religion against which he fights is not without its compassion and devotion to humanity, and the suicide which he justifies is condemned by that religion which holds out to humanity hope and encouragement.

The public will, no doubt, be pleased to read the condemnation which the Holy Father, Leo XIII., in his encyclical on labor, passes on the

trusts and monopolies of the day, which have driven honest labor to the verge of despair and suicide. Leo XIII. says: "The elements of conflict to-day are unmistakable. The growth of industry and the surprising discoveries of science; the changed relations of masters and workmen; the enormous fortunes of individuals and the poverty of the masses and the general moral deterioration, cause great fear to every honest and thoughtful man. The momentous seriousness of the present state of things fills every mind with painful apprehension. * * * All agree and there can be no question whatever that some remedy must be found for the misery and wretchedness which press so heavily at this moment on the large majority of the very poor. * * * The concentration of so many branches of trade in the hands of a few individuals, so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the masses of the poor a yoke little better than slavery itself."

If Col. Ingersoll and others whose chief aim seems to be to pull down that reverence and religion which seek fearlessly to teach all men the obligations of justice would spend the talent and time they devote to destruction to the proper adjustment and construction of society upon equitable basis, there would, in my judgment, be few temptations to suicide, and only the insane and morally irresponsible would flee from "the ills they have and fly to others they know not of." If the Colonel would preach this doctrine of justice and adjustment to the railroad wreckers and

trust corrupters who seek through the evil use of money to increase their capital for luxurious indulgence and to create a society of despair among the honest and struggling brain and brawn workers of humanity, I think he would be doing a nobler work for his fellow-man than contributing his luminous brain as a capitalistic trust to rob his fellows of the hope of a higher and happier realization than they find here below.

If death means oblivion Col. Ingersoll is right. Col. Ingersoll's policy would make men cowards. A man might abandon wife, children and the obligations of justice to his fellow-man simply because he felt the pangs of disappointment and suffering, and, freeing himself from his portion of the burden, leave an additional burden to others.

As to the outcast who has abused every faculty of head and heart, I cannot agree with the Colonel that he has a right to take his life. I cannot agree with the Colonel, for I view natural and supernatural obligations, and the Colonel has no regard for this view of the case.

Such a creature has, in my judgment, ceased to be a moral agent, and I might say of him what I have heard of a Yankee saying in a court of justice when asked by the presiding Judge, "What do you think of this man's moral character?" "Wal, Yer Honor, I don't know nawthin' about his moral carrikter, but his immorals are first class." This picture of the Colonel strikes me in the same way.

The Colonel's classic historical examples are prescribed in very bad chemicals. I don't think

his camera was in very good order when he focused the pictures. I do not think that the cases of Seneca, Brutus or Antony help his argument. The historical reasons given for their self-destruction convey no notion of heroic example, and I think the Colonel has been most unhappy in presenting these creatures as heroes. In naming Antony he left out Cleopatra. I presume he was afraid to insult the memory of the classic Cato by grouping him with two such immoral associates.

THOMAS DUCEY.

GETTING SQUARE WITH DESTINY.

NYM CRINKLE'S SARCASTIC REPLY.

At last Col. Robert G. Ingersoll has struck the keystone of popular desire in his advocacy of suicide. So brave a man, with such a noble indifference to the silly and outworn prejudices of mankind, deserves the heartfelt thanks of all honest men who have retained, in spite of bigotry and superstition, a wholesome and instinctive desire to cut their own throats.

I suppose the usual number of people will rise up to "answer Ingersoll." I am told that one of the chief occupations of men in the United States is answering Ingersoll. But in Mr. Ingersoll's present impregnable position no one but a fool would rush in to his own destruction. He is literally and absolutely unanswerable.

"When life," he asks, "is of no value to a man

and he is of no assistance to anybody, why should he not destroy himself?" This is the keystone of a higher life. It touches the fundamental right of everybody, first, to be worthless and then to get out. Such a clear and noble perception of man's inalienable right not only to destroy himself, but to make the excuse first, puts Mr. Ingersoll among the finest thinkers of our age.

"The old and absurd idea that we were made with a purpose and it was our duty to remain, has," he says, "been outgrown."

How these clear-cut enunciations strike at the very roots of being! How they brush away the modern cobwebs of sentiment and duty and let in the clear light upon the scientific fact that there wasn't any purpose and can't be any duty!

Out of this fundamental thought, when it is clearly grasped, springs that other beautiful and auroral sentiment which is animating men in Russia and Germany, namely, that the only duty man has on this planet is to end everybody and everything. The weak mind cannot in a moment seize the full glory of the overpowering sentiment. Only the majestic proportions of an Ingersoll's mind can give it full welcome without an effort.

"Why," asks this master thinker, "should the man who commits a crime stay to be punished, and thus put his friends and family to distress when he can kill himself?"

I have not seen anywhere a deep, broad thought so admirably put. Why should a man who commits one crime not commit two? I await with

equanimity an answer to that. It is true the religious fool will ask, why should a man commit a crime at all, and why provide an escape for him when he does? But that is the besotted reasoning of the insane orthodox mind.

No, sir, these questions of Col. Ingersoll reach down to the roots of things. "Why," he asks, "should a man endure the ache of toil when he can command the sweet sleep of death?"

I don't know. Do you? Perhaps he isn't as sure of the sweet sleep as the Colonel is; perhaps man, who has been corrupted and perverted from his pristine condition by religious folly, has got some kind of crotchet in his head that toil is better than sleep in the long run. That is one of those hallucinations that nothing will dispel but the clarion call of an Ingersoll summoning man to higher planes of self-destruction and repose.

It takes a long time to lift the imbruted and orthodoxy-drunken mind of man to the contemplation of pure ideals, but it is just such brave and beautiful words as those of Col. Ingersoll that in the end must do it. With an eloquence that is matchless he has been holding up to men for years the supernal happiness of "the dreamless sleep." "Next to eternal happiness," he declares, "is the sleep in the soft clasp of the cool earth." This is an oratorical slip, for it isn't next to it, but the same thing. But how few men realize it! It is only the truly great who can perceive the ecstasy of the dark, damp soil and long for the voluptuous clasp of the loving gravel.

When we have succeeded, as we assuredly will

in time, especially if this great teacher is spared to us, in convincing mankind that life doesn't begin to be as luxurious as the abnegation of it; that wet clay is more comfortable than dry responsibility; that any man can escape from toil, from taking care of his own children, from supporting his wife or defending his home—by cutting his throat; when we have established this great truth, then suicide will become the great boon of that poor humanity who prefers sleep to work. For "death," as Col. Ingersoll truly observes, "is liberty absolute and eternal"—that is to say, liberty from purpose, accountability and penalties—and it is from these things that the soaring Ingersollian mind wishes to escape.

Suicide is the great corrector of all evils. It is the one privilege given to all mortals through which they can crawl from the agony of doing something to the dreamless felicity of being nothing. What eons of agony the world would have been spared if this had been understood at the start and the race had generously and generally availed itself of it! Col. Ingersoll is one of the few men who see that great truth clearly.

How many years of bitter disappointment would have been denied to that little girl who found that her doll was stuffed with sawdust if instead of going to a convent she had gone upstairs and taken a dose of arsenic! All this time she would have been lying in the loving embrace of the sweet subsoil instead of fighting and suffering and learning the vain lessons of misfortune and building

up a superfluous character that must come to the same clay sooner or later !

But this opens a new subject, namely, the beauty of suicide by children who are unhappy and are of no use to anybody, and I leave the unworked thought for the able pen of the eloquent Colonel.

There is one noble phrase of Col. Ingersoll's masterly paper on the duty of self-extermination that is so recreative and sublime in its sweep that I cannot refrain from calling fresh attention to it.

He says that the Christ, if he were God, was a suicide, because, instead of using his power, he allowed a lot of weak men to kill him.

This is a very important point never before made that I know of. All that the Christ had to do was to say that he was not God and not the Christ and he could have saved his life. But he was too weak. So it has ever been with weak men. The cowardly martyrs were all suicides, for all they had to do was to abjure their convictions and their religion and live. But they preferred to die. Col. Ingersoll clearly sees that they must have preferred death to life or they one and all would have lied like sensible persons. And he points out that they must have been strongly impressed with the ecstasy of the dreamless sleep in the clasp of the clay to go through with so much suffering to obtain it.

The original simplicity of this is refreshing in our age of far-fetched nonsense about dying for principles and the faith. And it gives in its mar-

velous directness a new light on the fact that thousands of men and women have suffered and died who might have accused somebody else and lived if they hadn't been hungering for the cold clay.

Under the magnetism of the Colonel's splendid effort in behalf of promiscuous self-destruction, I hesitate to let my feelings run away with me. But, like all who have been under his spell, I see the heavens of a better era opening and the time coming when this earth, burdened with a sad humanity, shall be gladdened only by graves, and if any wandering spirit visits the redeemed planet he will learn that the race, having suspected the superior value of the dreamless sleep to the working life with one accord cut its multitudinous throat and got square on destiny.

NYM CRINKLE.

THE BRAVE LIVE ON.

A LETTER FROM REV. DR. PETERS, THE ANTI-CATHOLIC CRUSADER.

I have read Col. Ingersoll's letter on suicide. In answer I charge upon infidelity the increase of suicide. Nearly all infidel writings are apologetic for suicide. Infidelity practically says, "If you don't like this life, get out of it."

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,

The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that dread something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will?

Our land is red with the blood of the homicide and suicide. It is estimated that sixty-one persons die daily from premeditated violence. Have you seen a newspaper in the last year that did not announce a murder or a passage out of life by one's own behest?

Homicides predominate in the South, while suicides are more frequent in the North. I account for this because one-third of the male population in the South carry concealed weapons, and because of a false standard of personal honor. A Tennessee judge says: "More than half the homicides which occur grow out of the debased practice of carrying on the person concealed weapons."

In the North there are proportionately more suicides among women than in the South. The Southern woman has less marital misery. Divorces in the South are few. In Chicago alone there are more applications for divorces in one year than among the entire white native population in all the Southern States east of the Mississippi. Easy divorce causes the alarming increase of female suicides.

In olden times suicide was considered a sign of courage. Demosthenes poisoned himself when told that Alexander's ambassador had demanded

the surrender of the Athenian orators. Isocrates killed himself rather than surrender to Phillip of Macedon. Cato, rather than submit to Julius Caesar, took his own life. Hannibal a suicide, Lycurgus a suicide, Brutus a suicide. Times have changed, but still the conscience of America needs toning up on the subject.

A prolific source of suicidism is in the fact that we lay too high a value on success in life. Hence, if men fail to get rich or are exposed, suicide is often the resort. The coward sneaks to death, the brave live on. He is not valiant that dares die but that boldly bears calamity. Win success if you can, but don't blow your brains out because you fail. God, in the Bible, looks upon suicide as a crime, and that man who, in the use of his reason, dies by his own act goes straight into perdition. All the good men and women in the Bible left their earthly terminus to God. If any man had a right to commit suicide Job had. All his property gone, all his children slain, and from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet covered with boils; pestered by his wife—who was the worst boil he had—unmindful of all the comfortless talk about him, he sat down on a heap of ashes, with only a broken piece of pottery in the surgery of his wounds, yet crying in triumph, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change comes."

Men may sometimes have reasons for wanting to get to that sorrowless world where there are no notes to pay, no sickness to torment, no wolf of want to keep away from the door of the house

you love, but where there will be everything grand and without cost; but you will never get there by hurling yourself out of this life. God wants you to live here until you are fit to live somewhere else.

Don't jump out of the frying-pan into the fire.

MADISON C. PETERS.

SUICIDE IS NOT DEATH!

THEOSOPHY'S STRANGE VIEW EX- PLAINED BY W. Q. JUDGE.

As a student of Theosophy and human nature I have been interested in the discussion of the subject of self-murder. The eloquent agnostic, Col. Ingersoll, plants his views in the ground with the roots of them in the grave, giving the poor felo de se nothing beyond the cold earth to cheer him in his act, save perhaps the cowardly chance of escape from responsibility or pain. Those who as Nym Crinkle says, occupy themselves with replying to Col. Ingersoll fall back on the mere assertion that it is a sin to kill the body in which the Lord saw fit to confine a man. Neither of these views is either satisfactory or scientific.

If suicide is to be approved it can only be on the ground that the man is only a body, which, being a clod, may well be put out of its sufferings. From this it would be an easy step to justify the killing of other bodies that may be in the way, or old, or insane, or decrepit, or vicious. For if the

mass of clay called body is all that we are, if man is not a spirit unborn and changeless in essence, then what wrong can there be in destroying it when you own it, or are it, and how easy to find good and sufficient reason for disposing similarly of others? The priest condemns suicide, but one may be a Christian and yet hold the opinion that a quick release from earth brings a possible heaven several years nearer. The Christian is not deterred from suicide by any good reasons advanced in his religion, but rather from cowardice. Death whether natural or forced, has become a terror, is named "The King of Terrors." This is because, although a vague heaven is offered on the other side, life and death are so little understood that men had rather bear the ills they know than fly to others which are feared through ignorance of what those are.

Suicide, like any other murder, is a sin because it is a sudden disturbance of the harmony of the world. It is a sin because it defeats nature. Nature exists for the sake of the soul and for no other reason ; it has the design, so to say, of giving the soul experience and self-consciousness. These can only be had by means of a body through which the soul comes in contact with nature, and to violently sever the connection before the natural time defeats the aim of nature, for the present compelling her, by her own slow process, to restore the equilibrium in order to begin again the task left unfinished. And as those processes must go on through the soul that permitted the murder, more pain and suffering must follow.

And the disturbance of the general harmony is a greater sin than most men think. They consider themselves alone, as separate, as not connected with others. But they are connected throughout the whole world with all other souls and minds. A subtle, actual powerful band links them all together, and the instant one of all these millions disturbs the link the whole mass feels it by reaction through soul and mind, and can only return to a normal state through a painful adjustment. This adjustment is on the unseen, but all-important, planes of being in which the real man exists. Thus each murderer of self or of another imposes on entire humanity an unjustifiable burden. From this injustice he cannot escape, for his body's death does not cut him off from the rest; it only places him, deprived him of nature's instruments, in the clutch of laws that are powerful and implacable, ceaseless in their operation and compulsory in their demands.

Suicide is a huge folly, because it places the committer of it in an infinitely worse position than he was in under the conditions from which he foolishly hoped to escape. It is not death. It is only a leaving of one well-known house in familiar surroundings to go into a new place where terror and despair alone have place. It is but a preliminary death done to the clay, which is put in the "cold embrace of the grave," leaving the man himself naked and alive, but out of mortal life and not in either heaven or hell.

The Theosophist sees that man is a complex being full of forces and faculties, which he uses in

a body on earth. The body is only a part of his clothing ; he himself lives also in other places. In sleep he lives in one, awakes in another, in thought in another. He is a threefold being of body, soul and spirit. And this trinity can be divided again into its necessary seven constituents. And just as he is threefold, so also is nature—material, psychical or astral, and spiritual, all being bound together. Were we but bodies, we might well commit them to material nature and the grave, but if we rush out of the material we must project ourselves into the psychical or astral. And as all nature proceeds with regularity under the government of law, we know that each combination has its own term of life before a natural and easy separation of the component parts can take place. A tree or a mineral or a man is a combination of elements or parts, and each must have its projected life term. If we violently and prematurely cut them off one from the other, certain consequences must ensue. Each constituent requires its own time for dissolution. And suicide being a violent destruction of the first element—body—the other two, of soul and spirit, are left without their natural instrument. The man then is but half dead, and is compelled by the law of his own being to wait until the natural term is reached.

The fate of the suicide is horrible in general. He has cut himself off from his body by using mechanical means that affect the body, but cannot touch the real man. He then is projected into the astral world, for he has to live somewhere.

There the remorseless law, which acts really for his good, compels him to wait until he can properly die. Naturally he must wait, half dead, the months or years which, in the order of nature, would have rolled over him before body and soul and spirit could rightly separate. He becomes a shade; he lives in purgatory, so to say, called by the Theosophist the "place of desire and passion," or "Kama Loca." He exists in the astral realm entirely, eaten up by his own thoughts. Continually repeating in vivid thoughts the act by which he tried to stop his life's pilgrimage, he at the same time sees the people and the place he left, but is not able to communicate with any one except, now and then, with some poor sensitive, who often is frightened by the visit. And often he fills the minds of living persons who may be sensitive to his thoughts with the picture of his own taking off, occasionally leading them to commit upon themselves the act of which he was guilty.

To put it theosophically, the suicide has cut himself off on one side from the body and life which were necessary for his experience and evolution, and on the other from his spirit, his guide and "Father in heaven." He is composed now of astral body, which is of great tensile strength, informed and inflamed by his passions and desires. But a portion of his mind, called manas, is with him. He can think and perceive, but, ignorant of how to use the forces of that realm, he is swept hither and thither, unable to guide himself. His whole nature is in distress, and with it to a certain degree the whole of humanity, for through the

spirit all are united. Thus he goes on, until the law of nature acts on his astral body, which begins to die, and then he falls into a sleep from which he awakens in time for a season of rest before beginning once more a life on earth. In his next reincarnation he may, if he sees fit, retrieve or compensate or suffer over again.

There is no escape from responsibility. The "sweet embrace of the wet clay" is a delusion. It is better to bravely accept the inevitable, since it must be due to our errors in other older lives, and fill every duty, try to improve all opportunity. To teach suicide is a sin, only leads some to commit it. To prohibit it without reason is useless, for our minds must have reasons for doing or not doing. And if we literally construe the words of the Bible, then there we find it says no murderer has a place but in hell. Such constructions satisfy but few in an age of critical investigation and hard analysis. But give men the key to their own natures, show them how law governs both here and beyond the grave, and their good sense will do the rest. An illogical nepenthe of the grave is as foolish as an illogical heaven for nothing.

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE.

BETTER LIVE AND PROTEST!

ANARCHIST MOWBRAY WOULD MAKE AN END OF SOCIAL INJUSTICE.

I have long been a follower of the ideas propounded by Col. Ingersoll in matters theological, and I have a great deal of respect for the Colonel as a man. I must, however, differ in some things. While agreeing in the main with his ideas on suicide, I should hesitate to counsel mankind to take the step which he advises without making some protest against society, or those individuals who are absolutely responsible for the miserable conditions which drive men to desperation and ultimately to suicide. I have carefully followed this discussion and it seems to me none of the writers has dared to face the matter as—to my mind—it should be faced.

The true question is, Why are people driven to suicide? It is all very well, but it is not enough, to tell the starving wretch that he has a perfect right to get out of the world; that a dose of morphine will end his or her misery, or to claim, like Dr. T. S. Robertson, that medical men ought to be allowed to administer a dose of some opiate which would end forever the pain and misery endured by the patient.

I notice that Mgr. Ducey alludes to the Pope's encyclical on labor and its special allusion to the great trusts and monopolies which, as he says, have driven honest labor to the verge of despair

and suicide. This may be true, but has the Pope, or any other great ecclesiastic, dared to denounce the present monopolists of the means of life? No, sir. They have, it is true, advised employers to be less harsh, less exacting, but the whole history of the Church, up to date, has been a continued alliance with Government, and Property against those whose labor produces all that is useful and necessary in society.

We have had enough cant about the duties of employers and workmen, the "dignity" of labor, &c. From every pulpit people are taught to bear the miseries of life, because, forsooth, God cursed Adam and told him that henceforth (after his supposed crime of disobedience) he should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. The merchant who grinds down the price of labor, often below subsistence point, and thus manufactures unfortunate women by the thousand, and then makes it square with God by building a home for fallen women, no doubt believes this story about Adam. But he takes good care that he does none of the sweating himself.

Take the case of the poor, unfortunate workman whose labor is no longer required, owing to the advanced methods of production. He is forced to roam from place to place in search of employment, hoping against hope, till at last, driven to despair he takes one of the only steps open to him. He goes to the prison cell as a manufactured felon. For manufactured he certainly is by the present system of society which denies him the opportunity to work except upon degrading terms, and

not always at that. Or he may choose the extreme alternative of a suicide's grave.

It is all very well to talk philosophically about the grave being better than the cell. It may be to the man who has no hope of ever being released. But to the man who makes war upon society and receives a light punishment I should not counsel suicide.

I should say: "Live, and learn the cause of your misery. Once having learned the cause, strike at the root of the evil, try to alter the conditions, and if you find yourself opposed and are determined to commit suicide, do it; aye, and do it successfully. But don't do it like a coward, without making your protest against those who are responsible for your misery and for the misery of all this ever-increasing army of miserables and suicides.

Nym Crinkle pictures mankind getting square with Destiny. He fails to tell us what Destiny is. Does he mean that two-thirds of the human race are destined to be miserable, to work hard, to starve and die in wretched garrets, after having produced wealth so that a few shall live in idleness and have more than they need; so that a few shall be forced to waste their surplus wealth in a manner not only useless to themselves, but injurious to those whose labor made it? The grave-stones Nym Crinkle talks of should not mark only the graves of workers done to death.

That suicides are on the increase, all sane men must admit. The actions of many of those who have been identified with the Anarchist movement

have simply been suicidal. Ravochol knew he had no chance of employment. Driven from town to town in search of work, and meeting with denial, who can wonder that he should try to get even—if ever so little—with society, taking the first opportunity that came to hand? He chose murder and the guillotine, which was neither more nor less than suicide, for he could not hope to escape the penalty of his act.

Take Pallas, of Spain. Here again we have a determined suicide, though unfortunately his blow failed of its purpose. He attempted to strike down Gen. Campos, the man of blood and iron, who has perpetrated murder and brutality upon the starving peasantry of Spain. Pallas, instead of trying to escape, cried out, after throwing his bomb:—"I alone did it." He knew that death was the only outcome. Take, again, the case of Caesario Santo, whose act has struck a blow at society that will take it many a day to recover from—a blow, the answer to which has been repressive measures against Anarchists all over the world.

One of your correspondents, writing of suicide, advises legislation against it. Well, this is the only kind of legislation of which our masters know, to answer despairing mankind. Mgr. Ducey says, all agree, and there can be no question whatever that some remedy must be found for the misery and wretchedness which press so heavily at this moment on the large majority of the very poor. Why not have said "on all those who have the misfortune of being compelled to work for others."

But Mgr. Ducey fails, like Leo XIII. or Col. Ingersoll, to tell society what it should do.

This neglect reminds me of the actions of a certain Gen. Wallace, author of "Ben Hur." While in story he sympathized with the struggles of mankind, yet the moment man, driven to desperation, rebels against his brutal lot—as in Chicago—this same writer became the general who, instead of sympathy, advised bullets, and killing.

If these writers would only throw off the mask of cant and tell us what they have to propose as a means of solving the question, then this discussion on suicide would be of some practical good. It is not enough for one to say, "Society is wrong," and then go no further. If one goes so far as to condemn society, that person takes upon himself or herself the responsibility of showing society where it is wrong. I am afraid, however, that the fact of their remaining silent regarding the nature of the change which ought to be made, can be attributed to their respectability, the fear of offending the refined members of their class.

"Max Nordeau," in his book called "Conventional Lies," was very close to the point when he said that few, if any, people dared to tell the truth. What would these writers say if they dared? Would they condemn this system of capitalism where the few who legally monopolize the means of life have the power to grind down the many to starvation point and to deny the right to live to all those whom they do not require as wage slaves? Would these gentlemen dare to

deny the right of private property in land and in the means of life and preach the idea of the common holding of these things? Would they come boldly to the front and advocate and work for the building up of a society based upon the principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs"? I am afraid they would not. Nay, dare not, for that would pledge them to communism.

Your Christian correspondents have nothing but a heaven-after-death to offer mankind. Your non-Christian correspondents have only suicide—death and nothing after. It is a pitiful outlook and no wonder that few care to discuss the matter. There is one thing certain, however, that this question of suicide will force itself upon society, from time to time, in such manner as will compel attention.

It is one of the beauties of Anarchist Communism that we who believe in it can contemplate a society where self-murder can have no place, where we shall have no class monopolizing private property in the means of life, who, therefore, need not work; no other class who have no property and consequently must work in order that they may live to keep the idlers by their labor. We say that this system of society, which is the modern form of slavery, should be changed to a system which would give every man an opportunity of doing useful work. Then livelihood would not be precarious nor labor burdensome. Labor would be employed in free co-operation and the struggle of man with man for bare subsistence would be supplanted by harmonious combination for the production of

common wealth and the exchange of mutual services without the waste of labor or material. Under such conditions men would be free, because they would be no longer dependent on idle property-owners for subsistence. Thus, they would be brothers in reality, for the cause of strife, the struggle for bread, would have come to an end. Thus they would be equal, for, if all were doing useful work, no person's labor could be dispensed with.

This is the hope we hold out to struggling mankind, and while we sympathize with them in their struggles and agree that they and they alone have a right to decide for themselves upon the matter of death by suicide, yet we urge that it is better to strike some blow at that society which forces them to despair than to quietly die like a coward without a protest.

Educate, in order to understand the real cause of the misery of the world.

Organize, in order to overthrow this system which is productive of luxury for one class and misery and suicide for the toiling masses.

Agitate, in order to bring about a system of society such as Anarchist Communism would mean.

Then and then only will we have got rid of the cause and effect of suicide.

CHARLES WILFRED MOWBRAY.

THE RIGHT TO ONE'S LIFE.

COL. INGERSOLL'S ELOQUENT REPLY TO HIS CRITICS.

In the article written by me about suicide the ground was taken that "under many circumstances a man has the right to kill himself."

This has been attacked with great fury by clergymen, editors and the writers of letters. These people contend that the right of self-destruction does not and can not exist. They insist that life is the gift of God, and that He only has the right to end the days of men; that it is our duty to bear the sorrows that He sends with grateful patience. Some have denounced suicide as the worst of crimes—worse than the murder of another.

The first question, then, is:

Has a man under any circumstances the right to kill himself?

A man is being slowly devoured by a cancer—his agony is intense—his suffering all that nerves can feel. His life is slowly being taken. Is this the work of the good God? Did the compassionate God create the cancer so that it might feed on the quivering flesh of this victim?

This man, suffering agonies beyond the imagination to conceive, is of no use to himself. His life is but a succession of pangs. He is of no use to his wife, his children, his friends or society. Day after day he is rendered unconscious by drugs that numb the nerves and put the brain to sleep.

Has he the right to render himself unconscious?
Is it proper for him to take refuge in sleep?

If there be a good God I cannot believe that he takes pleasure in the sufferings of men—that he gloats over the agonies of His children. If there be a good God, He will, to the extent of His power, lessen the evils of life.

So I insist that the man being eaten by the cancer—a burden to himself and others, useless in every way—has the right to end his pain and pass through happy sleep to dreamless rest.

But those who have answered me would say to this man: "It is your duty to be devoured. The good God wishes you to suffer. Your life is the gift of God. You hold it in trust and you have no right to end it. The cancer is the creation of God and it is your duty to furnish it with food."

Take another case: A man is on a burning ship the crew and the rest of the passengers have escaped—gone in the lifeboats—and he is left alone. In the wide horizon there is no sail, no sign of help. He cannot swim. If he leaps into the sea he drowns, if he remains on the ship he burns. In any event he can live but a few moments.

Those who have answered me, those who insist that under no circumstances a man has the right to take his life, would say to this man on the deck, "Remain where you are. It is the desire of your loving, heavenly Father that you be clothed in flame—that you slowly roast—that your eyes be scorched to blindness and that you die insane with pain. Your life is not your own, only the agony is yours."

I would say to this man: "Do as you wish. If you prefer drowning to burning, leap into the sea. Between inevitable evils you have the right of choice. You can help no one, not even God, by allowing yourself to be burned, and you can injure no one, not even God, by choosing the easier death.

Let us suppose another case:

A man has been captured by savages in Central Africa. He is about to be tortured to death. His captors are going to thrust splinters of pine into his flesh and then set them on fire. He watches them as they make the preparations. He knows what they are about to do and what he is about to suffer. There is no hope of rescue, of help. He has a vial of poison. He knows that he can take it and in one moment pass beyond their power, leaving to them only the dead body.

Is this man under obligation to keep his life because God gave it until the savages by torture take it? Are the savages the agents of the good God? Are they the servants of the Infinite? Is it the duty of this man to allow them to wrap his body in a garment of flame? Has he no right to defend himself? Is it the will of God that he die by torture? What would any man of ordinary intelligence do in a case like this? Is there room for discussion?

If the man took the poison, shortened his life a few moments, escaped the tortures of the savages, is it possible that he would in another world be tortured forever by an infinite savage?

Suppose another case: In the good old days, when the Inquisition flourished, when men loved their enemies and murdered their friends, many frightful and ingenious ways were devised to touch the nerves of pain.

Those who loved God, who had been "born twice," would take a fellow man who had been convicted of "heresy," lay him upon the floor of a dungeon, secure his arms and legs with chains, fasten him to the earth so that he could not move, put an iron vessel, the opening downward, on his stomach, place in the vessel several rats, then tie it securely to his body. Then these worshippers of God would wait until the rats, seeking food and liberty, would gnaw through the body of the victim.

Now, if a man about to be subjected to this torture, had within his hand a dagger, would it excite the wrath of the "good God," if with one quick stroke he found the protection of death?

To this question there can be but one answer.

In the cases I have supposed it seems to me that each person would have the right to destroy himself. It does not seem possible that the man was under obligation to be devoured by a cancer; to remain upon the ship and perish in flame; to throw away the poison and be tortured to death by savages; to drop the dagger and endure the "mercies" of the Church.

If, in the cases I have supposed, men would have the right to take their lives, then I was right when I said that "under many circumstances a man has a right to kill himself."

Second: I denied that persons who killed themselves were physical cowards. They may lack moral courage; they may exaggerate their misfortunes, lose the sense of proportion, but the man who plunges the dagger in his heart, who sends the bullet through his brain, who leaps from some roof and dashes himself against the stones beneath, is not and cannot be a physical coward.

The basis of cowardice is the fear of injury or the fear of death, and when that fear is not only gone, but in its place is the desire to die, no matter by what means, it is impossible that cowardice should exist. The suicide wants the very thing that a coward fears. He seeks the very thing that cowardice endeavors to escape.

So, the man, forced to a choice of evils, choosing the less is not a coward, but a reasonable man.

It must be admitted that the suicide is honest with himself. He is to bear the injury; if it be one. Certainly there is no hypocrisy, and just as certainly there is no physical cowardice.

Is the man who takes morphine rather than to be eaten to death by a cancer a coward?

Is the man who leaps into the sea rather than be burned a coward? Is the man that takes poison rather than be tortured to death by savages or "Christians" a coward?

Third: I also took the position that some suicides were sane; that they acted on their best judgment, and that they were in full possession of their minds.

Now, if, under some circumstances, a man has the right to take his life, and if, under such cir-

cumstances, he does take his life, then it cannot be said that he was insane.

Most of the persons who have tried to answer me have taken the ground that suicide is not only a crime, but some of them have said that it is the greatest of crimes. Now, if it be a crime, then the suicide must have been sane. So all persons who denounce the suicide as a criminal admit that he was sane. Under the law, an insane person is incapable of committing a crime. All the clergymen who have answered me, and who have passionately asserted that suicide is a crime, have by that assertion admitted that those who killed themselves were sane.

They agree with me, and not only admit, but assert that "some who have committed suicide were sane and in the full possession of their minds."

It seems to me that these three propositions have been demonstrated to be true: First, that under some circumstances a man has the right to take his life; second, that the man who commits suicide is not a physical coward, and, third, that some who have committed suicide were at the time sane and in full possession of their minds.

Fourth: I insisted, and still insist, that suicide was and is the foundation of the Christian religion.

I still insist that if Christ were God he had the power to protect himself without injuring his assailants—that having that power it was his duty to use it, and that failing to use it he consented to his own death and was guilty of suicide.

To this the clergy answer that it was self-sacrifice for the redemption of man, that he made an atonement for the sins of believers. These ideas about redemption and atonement are born of a belief in the "fall of man," on account of the sins of our "first parents," and of the declaration that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." The foundation has crumbled. No intelligent person now believes in the "fall of man"—that our first parents were perfect, and that their descendents grew worse and worse, at least until the coming of Christ.

Intelligent men now believe that ages and ages before the dawn of history man was a poor, naked cruel, ignorant and degraded savage, whose language consisted of a few sounds of terror, of hatred and delight; that he devoured his fellow man, having all the vices, but not all the virtues of the beasts; that the journey from the den to the home, the palace, has been long and painful, through many centuries of suffering, of cruelty and war; through many ages of discovery, invention, self-sacrifice and thought.

Redemption and atonement are left without a fact on which to rest. The idea that an infinite God, creator of all worlds, came to this grain of sand, learned the trade of a carpenter, discussed with Pharisees and scribes, and allowed a few infuriated Hebrews to put him to death that he might atone for the sins of men and redeem a few believers from the consequences of his own wrath, can find no lodgement in a good and natural brain.

In no mythology can anything more monstrously unbelievable be found.

But if Christ were a man and attacked the religion of his times because it was cruel and absurd; if he endeavored to found a religion of kindness, of good deeds, to take the place of heartlessness and ceremony, and if, rather than to deny what he believed to be right and true, he suffered death, then he was a noble man—a benefactor of his race. But if he were God there was no need of this. The Jews did not wish to kill God. If he had only made himself known all knees would have touched the ground. If he were God it required no heroism to die. He knew that what we call death is but the opening of the gates of eternal life. If he were God there was no self-sacrifice. He had no need to suffer pain. He could have changed the crucifixion to a joy.

Even the editors of religious weeklies see that there is no escape from these conclusions—from these arguments—and so, instead of attacking the arguments, they attack the man who makes them.

Fifth—I denounced the law of New York that makes an attempt to commit suicide a crime.

It seems to me that one who has suffered so much that he passionately longs for death should be pitied, instead of punished—helped rather than imprisoned.

A despairing woman who had vainly sought for leave to toil, a woman without home, without friends, without bread, with clasped hands, with tear-filled eyes, with broken words of prayer, in the darkness of night leaps from the dock, hoping,

longing for the tearless sleep of death. She is rescued by a kind, courageous man, handed over to the authorities, indicted, tried, convicted, clothed in a convict's garb and locked in a felon's cell.

To me this law seems barbarous and absurd, a law that only savages would enforce.

Sixth—In this discussion a curious thing has happened. For several centuries the clergy have declared that while infidelity is a very good thing to live by, it is a bad support, a wretched consolation, in the hour of death. They have in spite of the truth, declared that all the great unbelievers died trembling with fear, asking God for mercy, surrounded by fiends, in the torments of despair. Think of the thousands and thousands of clergymen who have described the last agonies of Voltaire, who died as peacefully as a happy child smilingly passes from play to slumber; the final anguish of Hume, who fell into his last sleep as serenely as a river, running between green and shaded banks, reaches the sea; the despair of Thomas Paine, one of the bravest, one of the noblest men, who met the night of death untroubled as a star that meets the morning.

At the same time these ministers admitted that the average murderer could meet death on the scaffold with perfect serenity, and could smilingly ask the people who had gathered to see him killed meet him in heaven.

But the honest man who had expressed his honest thoughts against the creed of the Church in power could not die in peace. God would see to it that his last moments should be filled with the

insanity of fear—that with his last breath he should utter the shriek of remorse, the cry for pardon.

This has all changed, and now the clergy, in their sermons answering me, declare that the atheists, the freethinkers, have no fear of death—that to avoid some little annoyance, a passing inconvenience, they gladly and cheerfully put out the light of life. It is now said that infidels believe that death is the end—that it is a dreamless sleep—that it is without pain—that therefore they have no fear, care nothing for Gods, or heavens or hells, nothing for the threats of the pulpit, nothing for the Day of Judgment, and that when life becomes a burden they carelessly throw it down.

The infidels are so afraid of death that they commit suicide.

This certainly is a great change, and I congratulate myself on having forced the clergy to contradict themselves.

Seventh—The clergy take the position that the atheist, the unbeliever, has no standard of morality—that he can have no real conception of right and wrong. They are of the opinion that it is impossible for one to be moral or good unless he believes in some Being far above himself.

In this connection we might ask how God can be moral or good unless he believes in some Being superior to himself.

What is morality? It is the best thing to do under the circumstances. What is the best thing to do under the circumstances? That which will increase the sum of human happiness—or lessen it the least. Happiness in its highest, noblest

form, is the only good; that which increases or or preserves or creates happiness is moral—that which decreases it, or puts it in peril, is immoral.

It is not hard for an atheist—for an unbeliever—to keep his hands out of the fire. He knows that burning his hands will not increase his well-being, and he is moral enough to keep them out of the flames.

So it may be said that each man acts according to his intelligence—so far as what he considers his own good is concerned. Sometimes he is swayed by passion, by prejudice, by ignorance—but when he is really intelligent, master of himself, he does what he believes is best for him. If he is intelligent enough he knows that what is really good for him is good for others—for all the world.

It is impossible for me to see why any belief in the supernatural is necessary to have a keen perception of right and wrong. Every man who has the capacity to suffer and enjoy, and has imagination enough to give the same capacity to others, has within himself the natural basis of all morality. The idea of morality was born here, in this world, of the experience, the intelligence of mankind. Morality is not of supernatural origin. It did not fall from the clouds, and it needs no belief in the supernatural, no supernatural promises or threats, no supernatural heavens or hells to give it force and life. Subjects who are governed by the threats and promises of a king are merely slaves. They are not governed by the ideal, by noble views of right and wrong. They are obe-

dient cowards, controlled by fear, or beggars governed by rewards—by alms.

Right and wrong exist in the nature of things. Murder was just as criminal before as after the promulgation of the Ten Commandments.

Eighth—Many of the clergy, some editors and some writers of letters who have answered me, have said that suicide is the worst of crimes—that a man had better murder somebody else than himself. One clergyman gives as a reason for this statement that the suicide dies in an act of sin, and therefore he had better kill another person. Probably he would commit a less crime if he would murder his wife or mother.

I do not see that it is any worse to die than to live in sin. To say that it is not as wicked to murder another as yourself seems absurd. The man about to kill himself wishes to die. Why is it better for him to kill another man, who wishes to live?

To my mind it seems clear that you had better injure yourself than another. Better be a spend-thrift than a thief. Better throw away your own money than steal the money of another—better kill yourself if you wish to die than murder one whose life is full of joy.

The clergy tell us that God is everywhere, and that it is one of the greatest possible crimes to rush into his presence. It is wonderful how much they know about God and how little about their fellow-men. Wonderful the amount of their information about other worlds and how limited their knowledge is of this.

There may or may not be an infinite Being I neither affirm nor deny. I am honest enough to say that I do not know. I am candid enough to admit that the question is beyond the limitations of my mind. Yet I think I know as much on that subject as any human being knows or ever knew, and that is—nothing. I do not say that there is not another world, another life ; neither do I say that there is. I say that I do not know. It seems to me that every sane and honest man must say the same. But if there is an infinitely good God and another world, then the infinitely good God will be just as good to us in that world as he is in this. If this infinitely good God loves his children in this world, he will love them in another. If he loves a man when he is alive, he will not hate him the instant he is dead.

If we are the children of an infinitely wise and powerful God, he knew exactly what we would do—the temptations that we could and could not withstand—knew exactly the effect that everything would have upon us, knew under what circumstances we would take our lives—and produced such circumstances himself. It is perfectly apparent that there are many people incapable by nature of bearing the burdens of life, incapable of preserving their mental poise in stress and strain of disaster, disease and loss, and who by failure, by misfortune and want, are driven to despair and insanity, in whose darkened minds there comes like a flash of lightning in the night, the thought of death, a thought so strong, so vivid, that all fear is lost, all ties broken, all duties, all

obligations, all hopes forgotten, and naught remains except a fierce and wild desire to die. Thousands and thousands become moody, melancholy, brood upon loss of money, of position, of friends, until reason abdicates and frenzy takes possession of the soul. If there be an infinitely wise and powerful God, all this was known to Him from the beginning, and He so created things established relations, put in operation causes and effects that all that has happened was the necessary result of his own acts.

Ninth—Nearly all who have tried to answer what I said have been exceedingly careful to misquote me, and then answer something that I never uttered. They have declared that I have advised people who were in trouble, somewhat annoyed, to kill themselves ; that I have told men who have lost their money, who had failed in business, who were not good in health, to kill themselves at once, without taking into consideration any duty that they owed to wives, children, friends, or society.

No man has a right to leave his wife to fight the battle alone if he is able to help. No man has a right to desert his children if he can possibly be of use. As long as he can add to the comfort of those he loves, as long as he can stand between wife and misery, between child and want, as long as he can be of use, it is his duty to remain.

I believe in the cheerful view, in looking at the sunny side of things, in bearing with fortitude the evils of life, in struggling against adversity, in finding the fuel of laughter even in disaster, in

having confidence in to-morrow, in finding the pearl of joy among the flints and shards, and in changing by the alchemy of patience even evil things to good. I believe in the gospel of cheerfulness, of courage and good nature.

Of the future I have no fear. My fate is the fate of the world—of all that live. My anxieties are about this life, this world. About the phantoms called gods and their impossible hells, I have no care, no fear.

The existence of God I neither affirm nor deny. I wait. The immortality of the soul I neither affirm nor deny. I hope—hope for all of the children of men. I have never denied the existence of another world, nor the immortality of the soul. For many years I have said that the idea of immortality, that like a sea has ebbed and flowed in the human heart, with its countless waves of hope and fear beating against the shores and rocks of time and fate, was not born of any book, nor of any creed, nor of any religion. It was born of human affection, and it will continue to ebb and flow beneath the mists and clouds of doubt and darkness as long as love kisses the lips of death.

What I deny is the immortality of pain, the eternity of torture.

After all, the instinct of self-preservation is strong. People do not kill themselves on the advice of friends or enemies. All wish to be happy, to enjoy life; all wish for food and roof and raiment, for friends, and as long as life gives joy the idea of self-destruction never enters the human mind.

The oppressors, the tyrants, those who trample on the rights of others, the robbers of the poor, those who put wages below the living point, the ministers who make people insane by preaching the dogma of eternal pain; these are the men who drive the weak, the suffering and the helpless down to death.

It will not do to say that "God" has appointed a time for each to die. Of this there is, and there can be, no evidence. There is no evidence that any god takes any interest in the affairs of men—that any sides with the right or helps the weak, protects the innocent or rescues the oppressed. Even the clergy admit that their God, through all ages, has allowed his friends, his worshippers, to be imprisoned, tortured and murdered by His enemies. Such is the protection of God. Billions of prayers have been uttered; has one been answered? Who sends plague, pestilence and famine? Who bids the earthquake devour and the volcano to overwhelm?

Tenth—Again, I say that it is wonderful to me that so many men, so many women endure and carry their burdens to the natural end; that so many, in spite of "age, ache and penury," guard with trembling hands the spark of life; that prisoners for life toil and suffer to the last; that the helpless wretches in poor-houses and asylums cling to life; that the exiles in Siberia, loaded with chains, scarred with the knout, live on; that the incurables, whose every breath is a pang, and for whom the future has only pain, should fear the merciful touch and clasp of death.

It is but a few steps at most from the cradle to the grave; a short journey. The suicide hastens, shortens the path, loses the afternoon, the twilight the dusk of life's day; loses what he does not want, what he cannot bear. In the tempest of despair, in the blind fury of madness or in the calm of thought and choice the beleaguered soul finds the serenity of death.

Let us leave the dead where nature leaves them. We know nothing of any realm that lies beyond the horizon of the known, beyond the end of life. Let us be honest with ourselves and others. Let us pity the suffering, the despairing, the men and women hunted and pursued by grief and shame, by misery and want, by chance and fate until their only friend is death.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

THE CRY OF EARTH'S CHILDREN.

SOME GLIMPSES OF THE TRAGIC LIFE OF A GREAT CITY

The saddest and most pathetic phase of this remarkable discussion was the letters called forth from those whom poverty and suffering had brought face to face with suicide as a grim and real fact. They were printed in the New York World. A few selections are made. Civilization—the 19th century Civilization of free America, is drawn in dark and startling colors in the letter which follows:

Life is one continual struggle. I am a young woman of refinement, a widow and mother of three little ones. For three years my life has been most bitter. I could obtain little employment—not enough sometimes to live on. Mouths must be fed. I came from a pleasant home and have been driven to a little rear flat on a top floor. Summer coming deprived me of work. Night and day I have prayed for relief. Finally I made up my mind I could stand it no longer. I am only twenty-four years old, but I am wasting. I love my babies, but can I day after day see them grow more sickly for want of proper nourishment? My life is miserable—no pleasures, nothing but bitter suffering. Five years ago I had all that a woman would ask for, now I have nothing. I have appealed to well-known parties in this city for aid, employment, food. What did I get in return? Insults.

I am now on the brink of desperation. I owe rent and need money for actual necessities. It's only a question of a few days before I am dispossessed.

What can I do? I am not a pauper, but a gentlewoman of refinement, willing to work if I can find work. I appeal for work. If I can't find it suicide is all that's left for me. My darling babies would die with me, and simply for a saving hand four souls must be sacrificed. Won't some one aid me?

DESPONDENCY.

Thanks to the publication of this letter in the

World, this woman escaped starvation. Following is a picture of poverty, drawn by poverty itself:

With regard to this suicide question, which seems to cause one to pause and give it a thought, I should like to ask would it be considered a sin to take one's self out of the world when at most one can only earn \$1.75, \$1.20, \$2.10 and some weeks \$4.20, from which must be deducted from 23 cents to 46 cents per week for cotton? From this muncificent sum your correspondent must pay rent and feed herself, as well as child. Clothes are out of the question. One may say, why don't she do better? Simply because better is not to be had, and half a loaf is better than no bread. I buy your paper daily and Sunday. I have answered various advertisements personally and by letter. I have appealed to a wealthy relative for assistance only to have the door closed on me as though I were some common beggar. To my appeal and pleading to the husband who solemnly promised to love and cherish until death should us part, he seemingly turns a deaf ear. As he is in another State I can do nothing. This world of ours is very beautiful, and truly life is sweet, and while poverty is no sin it is very inconvenient. When one's rent is over a month due, and you can't settle only in small weekly payments, then poverty is like unto sin, more especially when all of any value upon which money can be raised has long since gone to pawnshops. I have been brought up to believe in God. I often think He

has forsaken me. Truly, the rich shall be richer and the poor shall be poorer. Tell me which is the greater sin—die slowly from starvation in this world of plenty, or take one's self from this earth into the great unknown, where there can be no hunger or rent?

A SADLY DESERTED WIFE.

This was from a woman. Here is one from a boy of 19.

I looked upon suicide as a sin no longer ago than two years, for at that time I had everything a young man need have. But look at the poor people who have toiled ten hours daily for just enough to exist on, as I have been for the last three months. I have not a bed to sleep on or a bit to eat. I only walk the streets and sleep in the park nights.

It seems to me it would please God to see a man better his condition, which suicide would do in my case, and a good many others. I have no parents or a relative that I know of. I am nineteen years old. I would commit suicide had I the courage

• ARTHUR CLIFTON.

What a poem of despair is here :

I have often heard people make the remark, "Only maniacs and cowards commit suicide." Now, from personal experience I think quite the reverse. I am a woman, twenty-three years of age. I am tired of life. I find no pleasure in it.

Never have had anything but a drudging existence, day after day, from year to year, poverty-stricken, no home (but cheap boarding houses); no mission on earth, no friends or relatives.

I have never been able to see why I was put here or why I remain, only because I am not brave enough to end all my misery, although once I did get ready to do so. I made every preparation, such as writing farewell letters, and one as to the disposition of my remains; packed up all my earthly "belongings" and labeled them. Then I carefully dressed myself and sat on the bed with the poison in my hand (a bottle of sulphuric ether).

But my courage failed me at the last moment. I was very sorry, for I had the trouble of unpacking my things and tearing up the letters. But it seemed to me that my hand was held by an invisible being. I tasted the poison, but could not take it. Now, I was perfectly sane, for I am a strong-minded woman.

I firmly believe in Col. Ingersoll's remark, "When life is of no value and you are of no assistance to any one, why not destroy yourself?"

I most certainly will have the courage to do so some day, for surely there can be no more misery in the "great unknown" than a sad, lonely unfortunate finds on this earth.

MINDOTA.

Here is the echo of this woman's despairing cry:

I quite sympathize with "Mindota" as I have passed through the same terrible experiences. But, like her, my courage failed. So that I know they are at least not physical cowards who commit suicide.

I am a working-woman, twenty-eight years old. Like "Mindota" I am without home or friends, and have absolutely nothing to live for, with the remembrance of years of drudgery in the past and no better prospect in the future. I am out of employment, and as I write this I have not one ray of hope.

I have often been told to cultivate a spirit of contentment and to be thankful that I have health. But of what use is health to wear away in a lonely life of toil?

I, too, have wondered what invisible hand kept me from that fatal step. For what was I preserved? But in my sorrowful revulsion of feeling I vowed that, whatever I lived through, I would never again attempt my life. But my sweetest thought is that this life does not last forever. In a few years at most it will be to myself and all weary ones as "a tale that is told." And I hope that I and every one of them may peacefully pass through the gate of death and enter into life eternal.

PATIENCE

A letter from one who has seen, with his own eyes, "how the other half lives" draws this tragic picture of modern city life :

Col. Ingersoll's letter, "Is Suicide a Sin?" is of intense interest, not because it is so ably written, but because it is timely, the more so because of the rapid increase of suicides in the past few years. While there may be a twofold question, viz., the right and wrong of suicides there is no question as to the present condition of business and other causes prompting men to commit the suicidal act.

After years of theoretical treatment and handling of all manner of topics, I have for months been down among the practical issues of life. With Col. Ingersoll I can see now why suicide, under certain conditions, is not only an individual right but why not do it under those conditions would be almost a crime. Not long since I would not have dared to so express myself; not dared even to think so. Not so now. I have touched, and closely, that other half of humanity in some of its bitter deprivations. The world is teeming with men and women upon whom is the brand of fate. Do what they may they cannot lift themselves from the wretchedness of their condition. Closer and closer, deeper and deeper, come the black waters of their destruction. There may be more than an excuse for the man who sees his sad fate and evades it by suicide. He may render a great service to those whom he could not otherwise help. No man can do other than thank Col. Ingersoll for his manly, outspoken and beautifully expressed letter.

If, however, there be condemnation for both the author and the writer, it will come only from

those few bigoted people who have never yet put themselves in the place of their fellows, many of whom are no less honest and worthy than they, but against whom the hand of an awful fate is raised. And although our modern religious theory bears down heavily upon the suffering classes, a just God, on the great day of individual reckoning, will show pity, even with eternal forgiveness, to any whom fate decreed should fill a suicide's grave and fade from memory under a suicide's shame.

TRUTH.

"IS SUICIDE A SIN?"

TRIAL BY A JURY; THE REMARKABLE VERDICT OF TWELVE EMINENT MEN.

Max Nordau affirms that the most of mankind are conventional liars. Very few men honestly tell their thoughts. For that matter few have any thoughts of their own to tell.

Summing up this remarkable discussion, the World newspaper formally submitted the question to a jury of twelve men. As juries go, it was an out of the way affair. All of its members are well known in the city of New York and many of them occupy positions of honor. This is the list:

Charles W. Brooke, lawyer.

Thomas Byrnes, Superintendent of Police.

Cyrus Edson, physican, Commissioner of Health.

John W. Goff, lawyer, counsel to the Lezow Committee.

Edward Hogan, Police Justice.

John F. McIntyre, Assistant District Attorney.

Theodore W. Myers, banker, ex-Comptroller.

Frederick Smyth, Recorder.

John Philip Sousa, musician.

Morris Tekulsky, President of New York State Liquor Dealers' Association and member of the Constitutional Convention.

Evan Thomas, President of the Produce Exchange.

Francis L. Wellman, Assistant District-Attorney.

It had been determined that the decision should be reached by a majority vote, for it would be practically impossible to find twelve men so chosen who would be unanimous on either side of the question.

The verdict as rendered stood:

Suicide is a sin, 9.

Suicide is not a sin, 3

But the verdicts of some of these jurymen are conditional. They can be best expressed in the ordinary language of jurymen. Let us suppose that a man has been on trial by the twelve for an attempt at suicide. Their verdict would then stand thus:

Guilty, 7.

Not guilty on the ground of insanity, 5.

The words in which each jurymen returns his verdict are worth studying. The opinions should be read in connection with the preceding chapter, "The Cry of Earth's Children." They were as follows:

In my opinion, all persons who resort to suicide are compelled by that over-whelming impulse which in itself is the conclusive evidence of insanity—or reach its commission by the morbid brood-

ings of a mind disorganized and irresponsible. Suicide and insanity are synonyms.

CHARLES W. BROOKE.

I believe that anyone who commits suicide is at that moment insane. If that is true, then he is both legally and morally irresponsible.

THOMAS BYRNES.

Suicide is a sin. But like most rules it has exceptions.

CYRUS EDSON.

Suicide is cowardice. Self-indulgence and egotism have more to do with it than insanity. To admit the right of self-destruction as a principle would be to advocate chaos.

JOHN W. GOFF.

My opinion is that more than 90 per cent. of those who commit or attempt to commit suicide are not in their proper minds, and are at least bordering on insanity.

EDWARD HOGAN.

Self-destruction is sinful because it is an offense against the law of God; it is sinful because it is a transgression of the moral and social law of the State. Under the law it would be silly to make suicide a crime, as no penalty could be affixed to it, save a forfeiture of the estate of the *felo de se* or the tainting of his family or his memory. However, the moral sense of many lands has deplored

suicide, and so repugnant has it been to conscientious and intelligent people that several law-making bodies have made the attempt to commit suicide a crime and have prescribed a punishment therefore. It would seem to me that this is right and proper. In making an attempt at suicide a crime, the several Legislatures must have had in mind that God gave life to man not to be taken at will; that man was put here to do his mission upon earth as well as bearing his part of the trust of life.

To allow a man who seeks to rid himself of those duties which he necessarily owes to his Creator would be a travesty upon all moral law; hence it is that the moral law respecting attempts at suicide has been incorporated into the written law of this state.

It is surely serious and sinful for a man to refuse to do his share of life's work—and avoid it particularly by self-murder. It is truly venal for a human being to bring children into the world to assume all manner of obligations concerning them, and then blight their lives by the commission of suicide, and leave them helpless in the world, and perhaps become charges upon the community.

To avoid one's share of the responsibility of life, and to throw his portion of its burden upon others by self-murder is doubtless sinful. It is a violation of every law regulating man's relation to society, and every effort tending towards its accomplishment should and ought to be punished.

I am strongly of the opinion for these reasons those who would attempt to destroy their own

lives should be dealt with as the law of this State prescribes.

JOHN F. McINTYRE.

In my opinion, suicide is a species of temporary insanity inspired by cowardice, which comes upon men when the future is all darkness and they have not courage enough to face consequences. It is a weakness and a sin.

THEO. W. MEYERS.

I regard suicide as a crime, but there are exceptions. The majority of attempts at suicide that have come under my observation have been made by people temporarily insane.

FREDERICK SMYTH.

It is my opinion that suicide is a crime against God and man. I know of no position in which a man could be placed that would justify him in taking his own life. I believe that nearly if not all suicides commit the crime under stress of mental aberration.

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA.

My verdict is that suicide is a crime against mankind and a sin against God.

MORRIS TEKULSKY.

Suicide is a mighty poor way to get out of this pleasant world. But if a man has a curiosity to quickly see the next, suicide is the shortest.

EVAN THOMAS.

No one who believes in God or in the immortality of the individual soul can doubt for a moment, it seems to me, that suicide is against the divine law. A suicide is a moral coward, one who has not the courage to face his surroundings and the problems of living that they may involve. All human laws, in my opinion, should be so framed as to sustain and carry out, so far as possible, the divine laws, and therefore attempted self-destruction should not be omitted from the Penal Code. No single life is so disassociated with the lives of others dependent upon it as to divest the act of attempted self-destruction of its criminal character.

FRANK L. WELLMAN.

CURIOUS FACTS ABOUT SUICIDE.

AN INTERESTING LETTER FROM NEW YORK'S STATISTICIAN

There seems to be a diversity of opinion in regard to the causes and motives which impel people to commit suicide. Some writers attribute suicide to a certain kind of climate; others assert that in the fall of the year suicides are most prevalent in this country; others think that persons of certain religious beliefs rarely commit suicide; others think that no sane person would commit suicide and others state that the natives of certain countries rarely commit suicide by certain means. All these statements do not appear

to be well verified or borne out by the statistics herewith submitted of self-murder in New York City. It is, however, reasonable to believe that some of the causes assigned have more influence upon the natives of one country than of another. This is possibly due to national habits and customs. There is no apparent reason why the Germans, who as a class are wealthier and more prosperous than the Irish, should so largely exceed the latter in suicides, unless it be the Teutonic national temperament. The Irish show a lesser number of suicides in proportion to their population than any of the other foreign-born inhabitants of this city. Whether this be due to temperament or to their habitual struggles with adversity and the vicissitudes of life in their country is problematical. In my opinion the temperament, national characteristics, peculiarities and customs of people have more influence on the causes of suicide than religion has. Homesickness, which is stated as a probable cause by a writer on this subject, can hardly be admitted as a reason for self-murder by Germans or Irishmen, as there are not probably more than nine cities in Germany with larger German populations, and but one city in Ireland with a larger Irish population than the city of New York. There can be no reason, consequently, why the natives of these countries should not feel as much at home in this city as they would elsewhere.

It is important to notice the disproportion between suicides of males and suicides of females. The number of males who committed suicide in

this city during the eleven years ending Dec. 31, 1880, was 1,193, while the number of females was but 328. The statistics show that suicide was much more prevalent among males than among females, and that during this period the proportion of suicides among males was 3.64 to every one among females, notwithstanding the female population is larger than the male.

Figures giving the proportion of suicidal deaths to the total population of this city since the year 1804 do not show that there was any epidemic of suicide in this city within this period, although some writers claim that there have been epidemics of suicide in foreign countries. The highest yearly rate of suicide in New York City between the years 1803 and 1880 was in 1805, when there was one suicide to every 3,017 inhabitants, and the lowest proportionate number was in 1864, when there was one suicide to 23,827 inhabitants. In 1874 the suicides were one in every 5,515 inhabitants. This was the largest proportion of suicides to the population since the year 1834.

A table showing the ages of suicides for these eleven years would present some interesting features. It shows that during this period there were twelve suicides of boys and three of girls, whose ages ranged from *ten to fifteen* years, and that one man and two women, aged from eighty to eighty-five, committed suicide. The oldest person who committed suicide during this period was a woman of German birth, aged ninety-one years and four months, for eleven years a resident of this city, who took her own life by severing the

vessels of her arm with a razor. The greatest number of suicides among the males were between the ages of thirty-five and forty years; among females between the ages of thirty and thirty-five.

There is nothing to indicate that the climate of this city has any influence upon suicides. The deaths from this cause vary yearly in regard to frequency. In one year they are most numerous in the first quarter; in another year they are most numerous in the second quarter, while in other years their number may be greatest in the third or fourth quarter.

Probably as interesting a table as is presented is that showing the means used by each of the 1,521 persons who took their own lives in this city during the eleven years. In this table some novel and curious means for ending one's life are shown, as well as the relative frequency or rarity of suicide by the different methods stated. Among some of the rare or painful means used for self-destruction are the following: One person, a native of the United States, butted his head against the bars of his cell; one person, a native of Ireland, butted his head against a wall; a German beat his head with a oil-stone; another German beat his head with a paving-stone; another German forced his head through the railing of an iron bedstead; another German jumped into a water tank; another of the same nationality, jumped from a railroad train. A Scotchman jumped into machinery. Two Germans hanged,

and then shot themselves. Two Germans jumped into the river, were rescued, and died from the effects of the immersion. Four persons, an Englishman, a Pole, a Swede, and an American, placed themselves before railroad trains. Three persons, of whom two were of Irish and one of Swiss birth, strangled themselves with bandages of straps. One Englishman thrust his head through a pane of glass. One native of the United States, inhaled ether, and one Frenchman inhaled charcoal gas.

Three natives of Germany ate phosphoras matches; three other Germans took rat poison. One American, aged thirty-eight, a prominent merchant of this city, took his life by shooting himself and exploding a hand grenade, and was shot by five cartridges; his father, aged sixty-one, was killed at the same time by the explosion. One Englishman stabbed himself and then jumped from a window. The most common means of committing suicide was by poison, which caused the death of 503 persons during the eleven years. Paris green was the most common of the poisons, and caused 200 deaths; the preparations of opium followed, with 139 deaths. Pistol and gunshot wounds caused 399 deaths; hanging, 239; cuts and stabs, (cutting throat, arteries, etc., with razors), 175; leaps from heights, windows, etc., 32, and drowning, 101.

I have comparative statistic of suicides in 217 foreign and thirty American cities during the year 1880. They were compiled from official sources in response to requests made to American consuls

and health officers and registers of foreign cities and to boards of health, city clerks and registrars of American cities.

Of the cities with a population of more than ten thousand which responded and forwarded returns, the highest death rate from suicide to the 100,000 inhabitants, in Germany, was at Gera, with 92.01; in Scotland, Paisley, 6.12; in Sweden, Stockholm, 19.08; in Belgium, Omarganow, 65.41; in Spain, Madrid, 16.97; Australia, Melbourne, 16.73; Holland, Amsterdam, 7.14; Canada, Toronto, 3.59; Austria, Vienna, 31.67; Bohemia, Prague, 36.53; Norway, Christiania, 3.30; England, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 10.04; Wales, Merthyr Tydvil, 4.12; Italy, Bologna, 13.70; South America, Buenos Ayres, 4.43; Switzerland, Chaux de Fonds, 53.69; Russia, Odessa, 14.63; France, Havre, 23; India, Calcutta, 13.50; British Guiana, S. A., Upper Demerara River, 43.39; Hawaiian Islands, Honolulu, 42.51; United States of America, San Francisco, Cal., 37.65.

The statistics of suicide in cities, I think will strengthen my surmise that national traits, etc., have more influence on suicide than religion. In some Catholic and Protestants countries and cities the suicides vary considerably. In Catholic Spain they seem to be less than in Catholic Belgium, and in Protestant England and Scotland, as the returns indicate. Catholic Vienna had more suicides in proportion to its population than Protestant Berlin, and Catholic Paris had more suicides than Protestant London, and exceeds the total number that took place in Catholic Spain. Equally favor-

able comparisons can be made with other Catholic and Protestant cities.

JOHN T. NAGLE.

ON SUICIDE.

SCHOPENHAUER'S FAMOUS ESSAY.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

Arthur Schopenhauer is now regarded as the greatest philosopher and most original thinker of Germany, since Immanuel Kant. He was born in Dantzic toward the close of the last century. When he was a lad his father, a well-to-do merchant, ended his life by jumping into the canal. He was well educated, and traveled widely. An accomplished linguist, he read the London Times—advertisements and all—daily. His chief work, published under the forbidding title, "The World as Will and Presentment," was written when he was a young man. For forty years, both book and author were buried in obscurity. German thought had been hypnotised by a professor of moonbeams named Hegel, "Caliban Hegel" Schopenhauer called him, in derision and despair. By and by this curious imposter died. Schopenhauer, meanwhile, had written another book—a collection of essays under the enigmatical name, "Parerga and Paralipomena." This the public began to read. Soon all Germany listened. He was then an old man. At the first paeans of fame, he chattered like a child. A year or so later he died, very quietly, all alone. He never married. In his youth gay society beckoned to him. He tasted, deeply, for he was young, handsome and accomplished. Then he turned away to tread the lonely paths of thought. His works are for strong minds only. He was the founder of modern philosophical pessimism. His chief disciple, Edward von Hoffman, still living, wrote "The Philosophy of the Unconscious." It is the most terrible work in literature,

As far as I see it is only the monotheistic, that is, the Jewish religions, whose votaries regard suicide as a crime. This is the more surprising as neither in the Old, nor in the New Testament is there to be found any prohibition, or even any decided disapproval of it. Teachers of religion, therefore, have to base their condemnation of suicide on philosophical grounds of their own, with which, however, it goes so badly, that they seek to supply what in their arguments lacks strength, by the vigour of their expressions of disgust, that is, by abuse. We have to hear, accordingly, that suicide is the greatest cowardice, that it is only possible in madness, and similar twaddle, or even the entirely senseless phrase that suicide is "wrong," whereas obviously, no one has a greater right over anything in the world than over his own person and life. Suicide, as already remarked, is even accounted a crime and with it is allied, especially in brutal, bigoted England, a shameful burial, and the invalidation of the testament, for which reason the jury almost always brings in a verdict of insanity.

Let us before anything else allow moral feeling to decide in the matter and compare the impression which the report that an acquaintance has committed a crime, such as murder, a cruelty, a fraud, a theft, makes upon us, with that of the report of his voluntary death. While the first calls forth energetic indignation, the greatest disgust, a demand for punishment or for vengeance, the latter will excite only sorrow and sympathy, mingled more often with an admiration of his

courage than with the moral disapproval which accompanies a bad action. Who has not had acquaintances, friends or relations, who have willingly departed from the world? And are we to think with horror of each of these as of a criminal? *Nego ac pernego.*

I am rather of the opinion that the clergy should, once for all, be challenged to give an account with what right they, without being able to show any biblical authority, or any valid philosophical arguments, stigmatize in the pulpit and in their writings an action committed by many men honored and beloved by us, as a crime, and refuse those who voluntarily leave the world, an honorable burial. It should, however, be clearly understood that reasons are required, and that no more empty phrases or abusive epithets will be accepted in place of them. The fact that criminal jurisprudence condemns suicide is no ecclesiastically valid reason, besides being ridiculous. For what punishment can frighten him who seeks death? If we punish the attempt at suicide, it is the clumsiness whereby it failed that we punish.

We find suicide celebrated by the Stoics as a noble and heroic deed, as might be confirmed by hundreds of extracts, the strongest being from Seneca. Again, with the Hindoo, as is well known suicide often occurs as a religious action, especially as widow burning; also an immolation beneath the wheels of the Car of Jaggernaut, as self-sacrifice to the crocodiles of the Ganges, or of the holy pond of the temple, and otherwise. In the same way, at the theatre, that mirror of life, where we

see for example in the celebrated Chinese piece, "L', Orphelin de la Chine" almost all the noble characters end by suicide without its being any where indicted, or its occurring to the onlooker, that they have committed a crime. On our own stage, indeed, it is not otherwise, e. g., Palmira in Mahomet, Mortimer in Marie Stuart, Othello, the Countess of Terzky. Is Hamlet's monologue the meditation of a crime? It says certainly that were we sure to be absolutely destroyed by death it would, considering the structure of the world, be unconditionally to choose. "But there lies the rub."

as there is.

The reasons, however, against suicide which have been put for-ward by the clergy of the monotheistic, that is, Jewish religion, and the philosophers who accommodate themselves to them, are feeble sophisms easy of refutation. Hume has furnished the most thorough refutation of them in his "Essay on Suicide," which first appeared after his death, and was immediately suppressed by the shameful bigotry and scandalous priestly tyranny of England, for which reason only a very few copies were sold, secretly and at a high price, so that for the preservation of this and another treatise of the great man, we have to thank the Basel reprint. But that a purely philosophical treatise, coming from one of the first thinkers and writers of England refuting the current reasons against suicide had in its native land to be smuggled through like a forbidden thing until it found a refuge abroad, redounds to the greatest shame of the English nation. It shows at

the same time the kind of good conscience the Church has on this question. I have pointed out the only valid moral reason against suicide in my chief work. It lies in that suicide is opposed to the attainment of the highest moral goal, since it substitutes for the real emancipation from this world of sorrow a merely apparent one. But from this mistake to a crime, such as the Christian clergy seek to stamp it, is a very long way.

Christianity bears in its innermost essence, the truth that suffering (the Cross) is the true purpose of life; hence it rejects as opposed to this suicide, which antiquity, from a lower stand point, approved and even honored. The foregoing reason against suicide is however an ascetic one, and as such only applies to a much higher ethical standpoint than that which European moral philosophers have ever occupied. But if we descend from this very high standpoint there is no longer any valid moral reason for condemning suicide. The extraordinarily energetic zeal of the Clergy of the monotheistic religions against it, which is supported neither by the Bible nor by any valid reasons, must rest in would seem, therefore, on a concealed basis. Might it not be that it would be the obligatory optimism of those religions which arraign suicide in order not to be arraigned by it?

We shall find on the whole, that as soon as the terrors of life counterbalance the terrors of death, man makes an end to his life. The resistance to these terrors is nevertheless considerable. They stand, as it were, as warders before the gate of exit. There is no one living perhaps, who would

not have made an end of his life if this end were something purely negative, a sudden sensation of existence. But there is something positive in it, —the destruction of the body. This frightens men back simply because the body is the phenomenon of the will-to-live, (the blind controlling influence of the world, according to Schopenhauer. —note.) Meanwhile the struggle with these warders is not so hard as a rule as it may seem to us from afar, and indeed in consequence of the antagonism between intellectual and corporeal pain severely and continuously, we are indifferent to all other trouble. Our recovery alone seriously concerns us. Just in the same way severe mental sorrows make us unsusceptible to corporeal ones. We despise them. Even if they acquire the preponderance this is a welcome diversion to us, a pause in our mental suffering. It is this which makes suicide easier, inasmuch as the corporeal pain associated with it loses all importance in the eyes of one tortured by excessive mental suffering. This is especially noticeable with those who are driven to suicide through a purely morbid but none the less intense melancholy. It does not cost such persons any self-conquest; they do not require to form any resolution, but as soon as the keeper's provided for them leave them for two minutes they quickly make an end to their life. When in disturbed horrible dreams, anxiety has reached its highest pitch, it brings us of itself to an awakening, and therewith all these horrors of a night vanish. The same thing happens in the

dream of life, where also the highest degree of anxiety compels us to break it off.

Suicide may also be regarded as an experiment, a question which we put nature, and to which we wish to compel the answer, to wit, what change the existence and the knowledge of man experiences through death. But it is a clumsy one, for it abolishes the identity of the consciousness which should receive the answer.

THE RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

SELECTIONS FROM THE FAMOUS PERSIAN POEM.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

Years ago, a knowledge of Omar Khayyam was a cult. It constituted a sort of bond, a circle of the elect. To know him was gain admittance among the rarer spirits. More or less it is so still. In a way, the Rubaiyat, as they are known, make up the strangest poem in the language. Back somewhere in the century's earlier years, an English orientalist, who was a poet beside, unearthed these bizarre and exquisitely beautiful and multi-colored quatrains. Edward Fitzgerald—that was his name—caressed obscurity as fools woo fame. He had a soul for beauty; and he shunned the applause of the mob as a corrupting thing. Between his hours with Tennyson and Landor, for he was the friend of such as

these, he wrought perfecting this, the one matchlessly perfect translation in all our literature. By and by he died in a sunny old age, as unnoticed by the busy world as was Walter Pater the other day. In the newspapers an obscure line; in all the coming years an unforgettable name.

It was Fitzgerald's work to transmute, rather than translate Omar Khayyam. The two were kindred spirits. I am not sure that Fitzgerald's translation is not finer than the Persian original. His touch is not so light, his wit is graver, but to our Saxon minds, he seems more of a poet. Omar Khayyam, that is to say, Omar, the Tent-maker, was born a little after the Norman invaders planted the first seeds of civilization and culture in barbarian England. He was an astronomer, and a friend of the Vizier Nizam, the founder of the great dynasty of the Seljuks. His reformation of the calendar is praised by Gibbon. He lived the uneventful life of a man of genius, and amid an old age as care free as his philosophy, he died. He was buried in a garden, just outside Naishapur, the place of his birth. Roses bloom and blow over his grave. Of course he was a heretic, condemned by the faithful of his day. By way of exchange, the latter are forgotten; his name is immortal. The extracts offered afford a glimpse of the poem. Not many enjoy it at once; like all good things he is an acquired taste. He is the laureate of our modern philosophic pessimism. All the longings, all the audacity, all the wit, all the poetic melancholy and cynicism which our own thought and day afford, he breathed into these quatrains, which will live as long as language remains among men. He anticipated Heine, or de Musset, by a matter of eight centuries. In all the antique world, he is alone is modern and of to-day. A man who is at once a philosopher and a poet, is apt to be a seer; or perhaps, like Omar Khayyam, he belongs to all time.

O. S.

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Wer't not a Shame—wer't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's Rest
A Sultan to the realm of Death addrest;

The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account and mine, should know the like no more—

The Eternal Saki from that Bowl has pour'd
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,

Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast.

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of Being from the Well amid the Waste—

And Lo! the phantom Caravan has reacht
The Nothing it set out from—Oh, make haste!

Would you that Spangle of Existence spend
About the Secret—quick about it Friend!

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True,
And upon what, prithee, does life depend?

* * * * *

Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise !
One thing at least is certain—This Life flies ;

One thing is certain and the rest is Lies ;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

Strange, is it not ? that of the myriads who
 Before us pass'd the Door of Darkness through,
 Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
 Which to discover we must travel too.

The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd
 Who rose before us and as Prophets burn'd
 Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep,
 They told their comrades and to Sleep return'd.

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
 Some letter of that After-life to spell
 And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
 And answer'd " I Myself am Heav'n and Hell : "

Heav'n but the vision of fulfill'd Desire,
 And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire
 Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
 So late emerg'd from, shall so soon expire.

We are no other than a moving row
 Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
 Round with the Sun-illumin'd Lantern held
 In Midnight by the Master of the Show ;

But helpless Pieces of the Game he plays
 Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days:
 Hither and Thither moves, and checks, and slays,
 And one by one back in the Closest lays.

* * * * *

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
 Moves on ; nor all your Piety nor Wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
 Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it,

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Where under crawling cooped we live and die—
Lift not your hands to It for help—for it
As impotently moves as you or I.

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the last Harvest sow'd the Seed;
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

Yesterday This Day's Madness did prepare;
To-morrow's Silence, Triumph, or Despair;
Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why;
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where.

And this I know: whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath consume me quite,
One flash of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross—allay'd—
Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh, the sorry trade!

Oh, Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestin'd Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake :
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take !

* * * * *

Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, reveal'd,
To which the fainting Traveller might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field !

Would but some winged Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate !

Ah Love ! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Remould it nearer to the Heart's desire !

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane ;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for one in vain !

And when like her, oh Saki, you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass !

TAMAM !

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